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### Declaration of Independence

The staff of **SHADIS** is determined to keep this publication independent and bringing our readers the best coverage of the gaming industry available.

Although the **Alderac Entertainment Group**, publishers of **SHADIS**, publishes game systems and supplements, **SHADIS** will not become a house organ.

Our policy (written in stone) is that **SHADIS** will not review products produced by **AEG** and that **AEG** is limited to one full page ad per issue. In addition, articles relating to **AEG** products will be limited to two issues per year — not to exceed a combined total of fifteen pages for both issues. (That works out to 15 pages per 672 published pages of **SHADIS**.)

This policy actually penalizes **AEG** for being associated with **SHADIS** rather than having an unfair advantage over other companies. We hope this policy demonstrates our determination to keep **SHADIS** truly independent. ❑

# Cries From the Attic

## Editorial of a Madman

### State-of-the-Zine Address

Ok, I struggled with the leading header for this issue's editorial and that's what I came up with. I recalled that the President has a habit of getting up in front of the world every so often to tell us how good things are. It doesn't seem to matter if the world's gone to pot and you're trying to decide if you should take the job at *Farmer Bob's Roasted Critters* or the one at *Happy Hussain's Soapy Carwash* — chances are, the President will tell you everything is better than ever and *he's* to thank for it. If things are really bad, he might forgo trying to fool anyone and just blame it on his predecessor. (Either ploy can be useful in an election year.)

So, it occurred to me that the editor of a magazine should be taken to task in the same manner. After all, he figuratively sits at the helm of the magazine from month to month and attempts to keep the whole thing going down the middle of the road without skinning up the tires on the curb or smashing into ongoing traffic.

It's relatively easy to measure an editor's success — if distribution is up, chances are he's doing a good job. (Or more accurately, he didn't screw up things enough for anyone to be any wiser and he got away with it.) If distribution is down then something's wrong and the editor could find himself looking for another magazine to screw up. (It's a sad irony of the publishing business that bad editors never die — they just move on to other magazines).

Well, I suppose by this point, it might be obvious that I'm rambling and avoiding the subject at hand. It's an easy matter to defend my actions — I simply direct you to the subheading of the editorial page (the part about the 'madman').

The truth is, I get a lot of mail from fans and well-wishers who sincerely want to know how **SHADIS** is faring. They've seen far too many magazines in this hobby burst onto the scene only to lock into a death spiral they can never pull out of. So the big question is: is **SHADIS** really doing as well as it appears?

The answer is Yes — er, No! Actually the answer is both yes and no. Is **SHADIS** raking in hundreds of thousands of dollars and poised to deliver the death blow to the competition — No. (Besides, that would be extremely rude, wouldn't it?)

**SHADIS** has been consistently growing in leaps and bounds since August of 1993. When distribution began to approach a pretty solid 10,000, we thought perhaps we'd hit the proverbial ceiling that most gaming magazines hit.

We held our breath throughout 1994 as distribution levels approached 15,000, then 20,000 and onward toward the 50,000 mark. It occurred to me as I was writing this editorial that we should be extremely pleased with ourselves and dancing in the hallway (if we had a hallway that is) — but it's very frightening experience. (Sort of like being shot from a cannon and wondering how you are going to get back down).

By the end of '94 things were going so well with the magazine and so many readers were screaming for more — that we decided to go monthly with the addition of **SHADIS PRESENTS**. Our little sister publication debuted last month (Issue 17.5) and if nothing else, proved once and for all that we could meet a monthly schedule. It also confirmed what we had instinctively believed — that **SHADIS** readers have a voracious appetite and wanted more. Sales on 17.5 were so brisk that the 'great experiment' has become a regular addition to our publishing line-up.

So yes, **SHADIS** is faring well and the future looks bright. We will continue to refine and polish the formula that makes up each issue of SHADIS in the coming year. Once again, as I've asked so many times before, I urge you to pick up pen and paper and tell us what you like and dislike about SHADIS.

Jolly R. Blackburn
February 26, 1995

## SHADIS HAS MOVED!!!

That's right, we were evict....er, I mean,
we moved to new offices.
So don't call that other
number or write to us
at that other place.

Our new address is:
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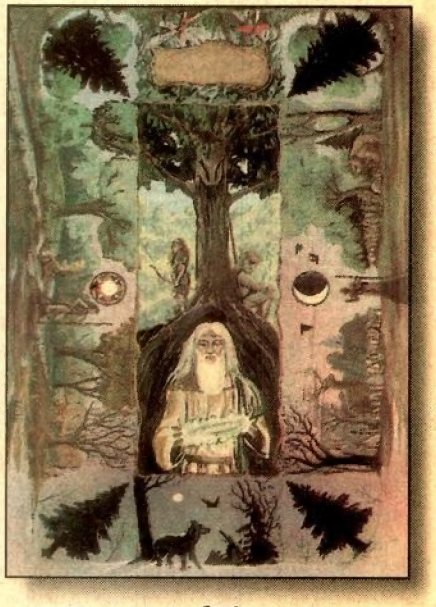

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# Mail Bag

## Our Readers Talk Back

*Greetings Dear Readers,*

*Due to space considerations, some letters have been edited.*

*The mail just doesn't seem to stop. Oh dear. We read each and every letter, so even if it isn't printed, your comments are welcome and your suggestions and constructive criticisms are thoughtfully considered. So keep the letters coming. Remember SHADIS is an interactive magazine – we want you, the reader, to be involved.*

*Gameweaver*

Dear SHADIS

I'm a recent SHADIS subscriber (just started this summer), and I first want to tell you that I've been very pleased with the magazine so far. My personal favorites were the article on The **X-Files**, and the recent featured review of a game system that I've grown to like, **FUDGE**.

In a sidebar to the article, you asked readers to send you our comments on whether we thought you should use **FUDGE** as the format for the generic rules and descriptions (like **The Good, The Bad and The Ugly**), and I wanted to drop you an email with a resounding YES!

**FUDGE** is a very elegant system, and I think its biggest strength lies in the fact that it is word based rather than numbers based, but has a very simple and easy conversion between the words and most numeric systems defined (i.e. it has a conversion suggestion list for both 3-18 and percentile systems).

I also think that **FUDGE** terminology will be easy to grasp even for those who do not have it, Also, those who are familiar with **FUDGE** can either use it as a conversion system into their system of preference, or they can use the system itself.

So, thanks for a great magazine, thanks for keeping it independant and for the most part "generic", and please do pursue the use of **FUDGE** for your generic articles in the future.

Thanks,

Tim Isakson
Alcatel Network Systems

*I received dozens of letters like yours, Tim. Apparently, those who have taken the time to download FUDGE from the Internet and given it a read-over share your enthusiasm for the game.*

*I was also surprised, at the amount of industry insiders (i.e. game designers) who came forward with letters of encouragement to adopt FUDGE as our in-house system for presenting generic material.*

*Even more surprising, not one negative letter or comment has been received to date, concerning FUDGE. We are holding off for one more issue before making our decision, but so far it looks unanimous.*

*JRB*

Dear SHADIS,

I've been a satisfied reader of your fine publication since issue #7 and I've found plenty of material in every issue to keep me happy, but #17 was your best ever. I read just about everything and it was all good stuff.

My favorites were: the awesome cover art, which in my opinion is one of the best covers I've seen on any gaming magazine; the history of role-playing article, which taught me that I didn't know about the early days like I thought I did; the Magic board game; and the review of ARIA: Canticle of the Monomyth, which I promptly went out and bought. Keep up the great work! I'm anxious to see what you can pull out of your hat next issue. Oh hell! I just wronte an atta-boy article. Yuck! Argh!

Frank Merenda
Huntington Beach, CA

Dear Shadis,

Thanks for the plug for CAR-PGa's Newsletter in Other Rags. However, the address is totally wrong! At one time it was 111 E. 5th (not 11 E. 5th), but that was over a year ago, the address now is 1127 Cedar, the rest of it being the same. Also, "Game organization newsletter" sound too much like a local club. CAR-PGa is an international game research and advocacy network, so shorten it to whatever will fit.

According to the information gathered by CAR-PGa the following periodicals have ceased publication: Ad Ininitum, Black Hole, Hexagone, Hit Points, and Last Province; at least that's what the post office keeps telling us.

The history of RPGs looks good and is much needed. I have something to add from my own experience.

In 1956, I was working at the Lakewood YMCA in Dallas as a summer job while in college. At that time, I saw a home-built gladiator combat game which had many of the features of modern RPGs: individual characteristics, learning by experience, a D20 hit location system as well as D6 damage. It also had multiple species.

Victor Raymond is quite right in the evolutionary approach on his history. RPG did not emerge fully-armed from the brow of any single person. Still, just on the off-beat chance that the creators of this early gladiator game are still gaming and reading SHADIS, or some reader knows of this game, I would like ot get in touch with them for more information and see the creators of this game get their rightful place in RPG history.

I remember it particularly well because it was the first time I'd every seen a polyhedron die, but I can't remember if whether they numbered an icosahedron or if it came with numbers.

Many have disputed the fact that such polyhedra were on the market back then. For bonafides, tell me what the arena was made of, the tiger's name, or the temporary location of the Y at that time, and we will work from there.

Of course, if anyone knows of other pre-TSR RPGs, I would love to hear the details.

Paul Caldwell, Jr.
CAR-PGa

*Well, we're putting your letter before 40,000+ readers Paul. Hopefully, someone out there can provide further details.*

*I'd be very interested in see a copy of the rules.*

*JRB*

Dear Masters of SHADIS,

GEEEEZZZ! Where the hell did this magazine come from? Heaven probably. SHADIS is one of the best magazines out there. At first I thought it was just another two-bit, cheap, boring magazine.

I saw #16 laying on the shelf at my local convenience store and noticed it came with a free Dark Magic Card.

At first glance I figured it was an expensive Dark card with a cheezy magazine attached. I figured, "What the hell?" and bought it.

When I got home, I check the card which turned out to be a Savaen

Elves, and began to read the magazine.

I was blown away!!

You guys actually have ARTICLES!! Good ones too! The charts and tables are just some of the great things about this magazine. I loved **Ridiculous Manor**!

The same day I talked my parents in to buying me a subscription as a Christmas present. I'll look forward to every issue and I'll never stop subscribing as long as I live!

Thanks again for making such a great magazine!

Your newest and best fan,

Mat Warner
Wakefield, RI

Dear SHADIS,

I just bought SHADIS #15 and enjoyed it very much. I bought three copies at different stores to get the free Legends cards. I ended up with a Syphon Soul, and two Lady Orcas (one of which was signed by the artist).

I was curious, has anyone else reported finding signed cards in their issues?

Kevin Sharp
Warren MI

*Actually, Kevin, we inserted over 100 signed Legends cards in Issue 15 along with nearly 20,000 unsigned cards. Congratulations on stumbling upon one of the signed cards.*

JRB

Dear SHADIS,

I purchased issue #17 and was very impressed with its high quality. Your magazine has been getting strong attention here in Japan, as I'm sure is the case in other countries.

I want to subscribe to your magazine but I could not find the foreign rate. I'm sure there are many others, like myself, who are potential subscribers outside the USA.

Fumio Hoshino
Kanagawa-Ku, Yokohama

*Thanks for your letter Fumio. We've been amazed at the support we've been getting from abroad.*

*We do indeed have an international subscription rate. It is posted every issue onthe contents page - albeit, in very small print. ($50.00 for Overseas subscriptions).*

*Your letter did bring up a good point. I just noticed our business reply subscription card makes no mention of the overseas rate. We will correct that oversight immediately.*

*JRB*

To the Editor,

I could not help noticing that Victor Raymond left out one glaring omission in his otherwise excellent article on the origins of RPG's. Robert Louis Stevenson also played war games with toy soldiers, devising a system far more "realistic" than H. G. Wells. His writings appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1898, and included his writings of his "role play character," a war correspondent.

I also wanted to write and let you know how much I enjoy SHADIS. It is unusual for me to read a fantasy RPG magazine; yours is the exception. As a historical minatures gamer (and a frequent contributor for *Historical Gamer Magazine*), I don't spend much time on the fantasy end of the hoibby, but I do play WRG's **Hordes of the Things**, an excellent fast-play set of fantasy battle rules. Like FUDGE, it allows for a great deal of flexibility and is very easy to learn. If you're interested in an article on this subject, please let me know; I'd be happy to put one together for SHADIS.

David Smith
Fort Bragg, California

*Thanks for the information, David. As you may have noticed, part two of the History of RPGs has been pushed back an issue. It'll be along soon. Meanwhile, enjoy this issue's special slant on cities.*

*We are always accepting articles! If any of you have something that you think SHADIS might like, we encourage you to send it in (our address is in the masthead). Send us an SASE (with the new and improved postage) for our Writers and Artists Guidelines.*

*Gameweaver*


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# Real Spies

## The World of Espionage According to Carl Larson

**By Dave Dollar © 1994 • Illustrated by James Kovalic © 1994**

### Spies Fly Coach

Post-it notes are the operative's best friend. Spies, just like air traffic controllers, are plagued by forgetfulness. Recently, I was cleansing my refrigerator of over a year's accumulation of post-it sediment (with a putty knife) and found several interesting post-its. "Get Milk," said one. Others said things like, "Water plants," "Buy beer," and "Did you forget your pants?"

Finally, I uncovered one that had been concealed under a piece of three-month-old toast. It read, "Defuse Bomb." It's been so long since I wrote that one that I can't quite remember what it was for, or even how that particular piece of toast came to be in the laundry room, but I'm certain it was pretty important at the time. Maybe it had something to do with that big fire in the Secretary of State's office last May. Maybe I'd better not mention it to anyone.

It's not my fault, really, I mean, anyone could've forgotten that. Spies forget things too. One thing I never forget, however, is my body armor. Yes, I may stagger sleepily out of my apartment, briefcase in hand, wearing my bathrobe and a thick beard of shaving cream, but you'd better bet that there's a full set of boron underneath.

Shopping for body armor always reminds me of those TV mail-order ads. The guys down at the surplus store are always coming up with new and exciting bullet-proof materials that are, "Thinner than bathroom tissue and yet still stops a rampaging bull moose—like this!" And if I order today I get a free bowl of soup! Of course, the impact of a bullet is still ferocious, and tissue-thin boron long-johns don't help much when you're vomiting your intestines up into your brain. At least you don't mess up the carpet.

Seriously though, did you ever notice that James Bond is continuously being

given things like, "The amazing-harmonica-aqualung," or "The wristwatch-that-tells-time-in-36-cities-and-still-cuts-through-four-inch-thick-battleship-plate—like this!" Never once has this guy ever even thought about body armor! Frankly, I can't believe he's still alive.

In spy movies you always see the hero driving a car that costs enough to feed the starving masses of the world and wearing suits that, if he decided to pawn them, would buy him a very nice, second-hand space shuttle. I estimate that Bond spends approximately $700,000 equipping his car with various machine guns, lasers, rotating license plates, villain-seeking missiles and full wet bar. Somehow, he manages to find a use for every one of these gimmicks before the two-hour epic has run its course.

In my personal experience, the handiest gadget in my Volkswagen bug is the little magnetic key holder under the back bumper (only $1.49 at K-mart). It is unbearably embarrassing to be fleeing from a crack terrorist hit team, only to discover that you've locked your keys in your car. Spies are often too busy worrying about important things, such as where the best drink specials are on Thursday night, to be 100% certain that they have their car keys on them at all times. Forgetfulness.

Take grenades, for example. I hate grenades. I think I was ruined on hand grenades when I was involved in a grueling high-speed chase (quite an accomplishment in a bug). In a moment of sheer brilliance, I happened to remember that I had this old grenade hanging from the rear-view mirror where most people keep their fuzzy dice. I pulled the pin, tossed the trigger handle into the back seat and lobbed the explosive neatly out the window.

Had I remembered to roll down the window I would not have spent four hours in my insurance agent's office trying to convince him that my car had been destroyed by a low-flying flock of migrating stinger missiles. When it comes to forgetfulness, grenades are very unforgiving.

Why spend obscene amounts of money on a solid gold sports car that goes faster than most commercial airlines when you know that its going to be shot, blown up, or impounded before you make the first payment? You think I'm made of money? No.

Real spies are not made of money. Once I was actually so broke that I had to get from Washington to Paris by packing myself in a crate (not without plenty of beer and munchies) and mailing myself Federal Express to my girlfriend's apartment. If you plan to try this yourself, be sure to get the zip code right. Paris is a long way when you have to detour through Pakistan.

For real spies, some missions don't pay too much. After taxes, hospital bills, damages and speeding tickets, my last bonus check came out to $6.47. The original amount on the check was $55,000. Actually, I think it was the damages that killed me. All I got away with was $6.47, a postcard of the Eiffel Tower and a stern reprimand from my director about the indiscriminate use of a flame-thrower in the Louvre. N.A.T.O. would have picked up the damages but I was supposed to have been on vacation.

If you're interested, in Paris, $6.47 will buy four packs of cigarettes. Most spies are rabid nicotine addicts—a result of the tremendous stress generated by having to forge all the proper paperwork to cover the disappearance of your director's new Mercedes. Not that I advocate smoking or anything, its deadly, but if your predicted life expectancy is only eight months—what the heck?

All the 'no smoking' signs in the State Department now have bullet-proof Plexiglas over them to keep them legible. I've seen operatives, stuck waiting in line at the Federal Express counter (beer and munchies in hand) get into fist fights over who got to lick the clerk's ashtray clean. Lacking money to buy cigarettes, I've seen Bob fishing the half-smoked butts out of the ashtrays at the Department of Defense (though he would never admit to this).

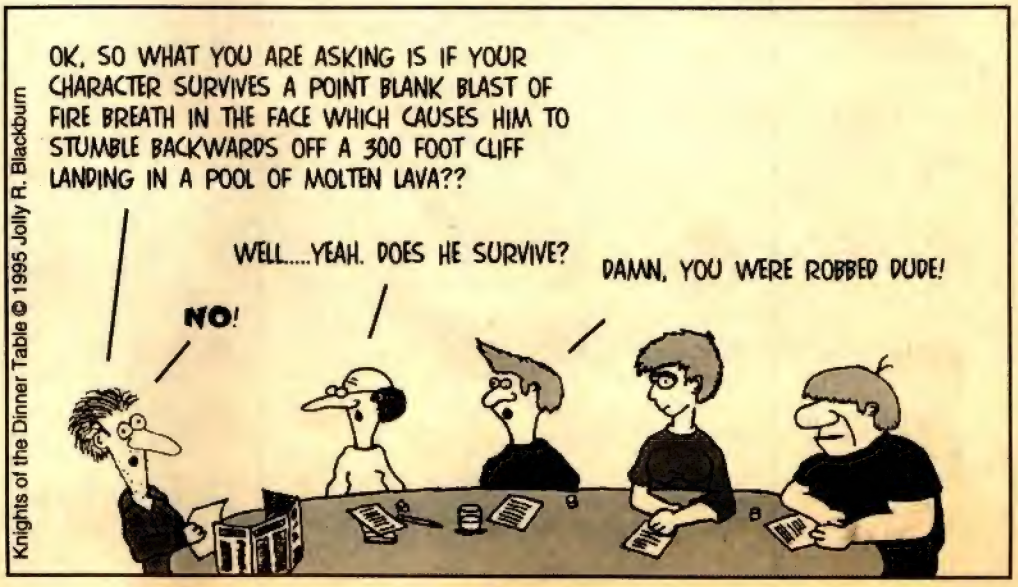
Still, though my girlfriend would never believe me, I would sooner go an hour without a cigarette than an hour without my body armor. Cigarettes take months, maybe years to kill you. Going out in Paris without my body armor would land me face-down in the Seine in a day—less if I was actually working.

Which brings me to the subject of Teflon-coated bullets. These sadistic rounds were obviously invented by some pasty-faced geek technician at some munitions company who has never had the displeasure of being shot (yet). In addition to leaving a nice, clean, no-stick wound, these obnoxious little slugs go right through vests and leggings rated as, "Effective Against as Many as Four Bull Moose." If I want to inflict a nice, clean, no-stick wound on someone, I usually spray my ammo with a generous helping of Pam cooking spray. This, unfortunately, does not help a bullet penetrate more than the twelve Care Bears (or fourteen Cabbage Patch kids) that a normal, unlubricated round would go through.

The boys at the firing range never complain about cleaning up the burnt stuffing or scattered plastic eyeballs, but Bob thinks its very unprofessional.

*Next time...French Food and Micronauts.*

❑



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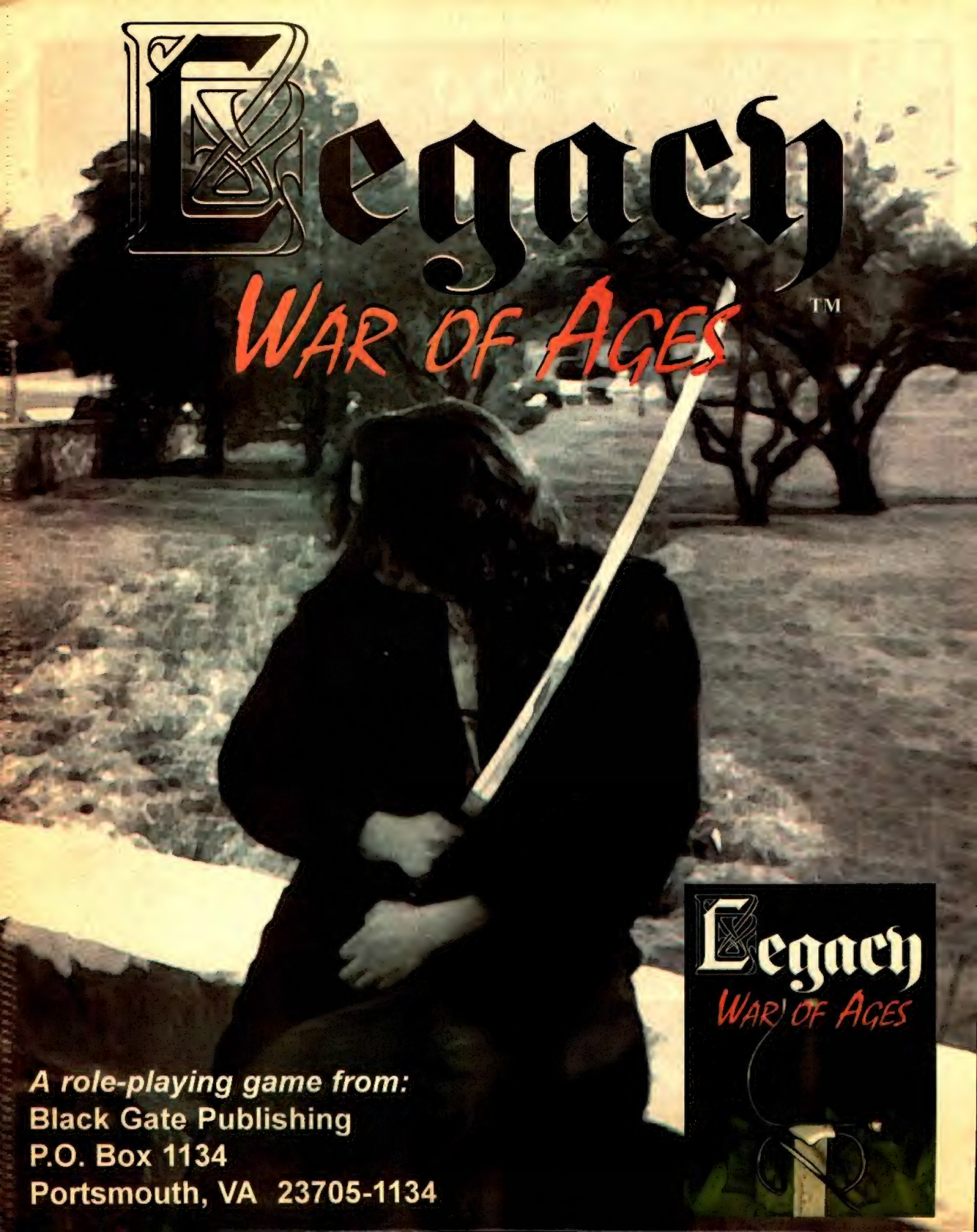




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GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

# Henley's

## A Traveller's Guide to a Popular Tavern

**Written by Michael Lambert © 1995, Illustrated by George Vrbanic © 1994**

*With a license dating back nearly 300 years, to the time of the first Pendarien Emperors, Henley's is the oldest and most renowned of the taverns of Altimer's Cross. It is located in the prestigious Old Quarry section, a pleasant walk south from Market Square. Henley's can also be reached via numerous teleportation portals scattered throughout every portion of the city.*

*Although it retains many of its original features, Henley's has undergone major changes throughout the centuries.*

*The current owner, Muaramen, a distant relation of the original Henley, has vowed to maintain the atmosphere of casual comfort that has always been the hallmark of the tavern, while using the latest magical techniques to accommodate the always increasing number of new patrons.*

*The dishes and drinks are first rate, but entertainment is still the major attraction at Henley's. Whether it is the elaborate illusions in the Common*

*Room, the nightly magical battles (non-lethal, of course), or the raucous diversions of the Wild Side, no one leaves Henley's unsatisfied. For theatrics, presentation and companionship the tavern has no equal, and it presents the city's best qualities to all newcomers who are directed there.*

*Additions: The purchase of the neighboring Welldigger's Union Hall, and the renovation of a dozen bedrooms on the side, gives Henley's a total of 28 high-quality guest rooms. Spotlessly clean and tastefully decorated, these rooms are the rival of any of the finest inns in the city.*

**Source: Eberheart's**
**"Best Taverns of Altimer's Cross"**

Mugs rattling and thumping on wooden tables, clandestine meetings held in smoky corners, good-natured joking at the bar - the sights and sounds of a city tavern are well-known to experienced and novice role-players alike. Once the loot is sold, equipment fixed and party members healed, the tavern is the most likely spot for characters to spend down-time between adventures. There are rooms to rent for a night or a week's stay, a bartender or waitress to fill them in with news of the city, and any number of new people to meet in the common room. Urban adventures provide the information and setting that give a campaign depth, and the tavern is an essential part of the action.

Details create depth in a fantasy campaign, and depth leads to greater realism. Just as a storyteller would not describe each scene the same way, every tavern the players enter shouldn't be the same. A stereotypical fantasy tavern with flirtatious barmaids, a talkative bartender and rude patrons is fine for brief visits to a new city in between adventures, but players should have the option of frequenting unique, detailed taverns to offset this lack of originality. In the city they've chosen as their base of operations, this type of detail is essential for any tavern they will visit with regularity. The motives and personalities of the staff and the patrons are necessary for creating realistic role-playing situations, and the physical setting must be known so descriptions are detailed and consistent. With this type of preparation, players will enjoy visiting the tavern again and again, making friends, establishing reputations, and, occasionally, rubbing elbows with the movers and shakers of a major fantasy city.

Henley's is this type of tavern. From the menu with foods unique to a fantasy setting, to its well-trained staff and diverse clientele, it's a unique setting that the party can always return to between adventures. The types of food, service and social contact that are available can accomodate the needs of different types of role-players, from the competitive, loud fun of the Wild Side, to the business and social interaction of the Common Room. This enables the players to accomplish a number of different objectives in one area, which means the DM can keep the urban adventure localized and concentrate on developing plot lines in and around the tavern.

There's enough detail on Henley's to add a number of different sub-plots to an ongoing campaign . . . but there's no need to rush. Develop the tavern and the non-player characters whose lives revolve around it slowly, introducing it piece by piece to the players over the course of a number of different adventures. Once the possibilities for role-playing have been exhausted, it becomes as lifeless as any

# Henley's

*A 300 Year Tradition*

### Light Fare

| | |
|---|---|
| Orc Belly Soup | 1 sp |
| Roc Egg Drop Soup | 2 gp |
| The Doppleganger* | 2 gp |
| Dwarf Salad | 5 sp |
| Altimeran Lemon Salad | 6 sp |
| Fried Potatoes | 3 sp |
| Pop's Gut Busters | 5 sp |
| Chicken Fingers | 3 sp |

### Seafood

| | |
|---|---|
| Crab legs (Giant) | 10 gp |
| Shrimp Platter | 4 gp |
| Afane Steak | 11 gp |
| Island Fish | 10 gp |
| Trout or Salmon | 3 gp |
| Catch of the Day | 3 gp |

### House Drink Specials

| | |
|---|---|
| Henley's Inferno* | 1 gp |
| Henley's Bitters | 3 sp |
| The Green Tongue* | 5 gp |
| Wet Vorpal | 2 sp |
| The Rainbow* | 1 gp |
| Goblin Slide | 3 sp |
| Razorback | 3 sp |

### Light Drinks

| | |
|---|---|
| Elven Tea | 3 sp |
| Elemental Water | 1 gp |
| Milk Shake (Vanilla, Choc, Elderberry) | 1 sp |
| Rimal Coffee* | 1 gp |

### Meat

| | |
|---|---|
| Dragon Steak | varies |
| Roast Lamb | 10 gp |
| Venison | 2 gp |
| Rabbit (Whole) | 8 sp |
| Braised Owl Bear | 15 gp |
| Griffin | 15 gp |
| Henley's Stew | 8 sp |
| Wild Boar Sandwich | 5 sp |

### Specials

| | |
|---|---|
| The Barbarian Feast | 5 gp |
| Hordes of Gehenna* | 15 gp |
| The Wayfarer* | 7 gp |
| Something on a Plate (Pop's Choice) | 4 gp |
| The Late Night Special | 4 gp |

### Ales & Meads

| | |
|---|---|
| Dwarven Ale* (Headknockers, Pit, Grog) | 1 gp |
| Pot of Pop's | 1 sp |
| Crivakk* | 3 sp |
| Hedda's Gold | 4 sp |
| Muaramen's Deep Red | 4 sp |
| Choke-it-Downs | 1 sp |

### Wines (by bottle)

| | |
|---|---|
| Hmarren Plum | 1 gp |
| Khemish | 10 gp |
| Vendel's | 20 gp |
| Elven White | 150 gp |
| Dark River* | 500 gp |

*"If you don't know what it is, don't eat it." - Pop*

** Try us for your special drink request...If we like it, dinner's on us*

other tavern, and of little value in getting the player's interest.

## Places

**General Appearance.** From the outside, Henley's appears to be a relatively unremarkable stone building, with large, shuttered windows and solid oak doors. It is two stories high, with a red slate roof and large gardens on either side. These gardens separate the tavern from nearby buildings, and a slow-moving canal forms its rear boundary. The name of the tavern is engraved on the front door, but the only other adornment is a small blue flag hanging from a second story window that indicates the tavern was not occupied during the Doppleganger Wars. Scorch marks from a battle during the war are clearly visible on the front portion of the building.

The ordinary exterior of the tavern hides many of the special properties that have been added over the years by different owners. The buildings, garden and nearby area are enchanted to detect ethereal, astral, or invisible creatures — any intrusion sets of an alarm in Lantenach's office. The building itself is warded by powerful magics that make it nearly impervious to physical damage — even the windows can't be broken. Finally, magical silence spells around the windows and doors keep the sounds of the tavern from spilling out of the building, and newcomers may be startled by the transition from the street to the interior.

**The Common Room.** Three doors (a, b, and c) lead to Henley's large common room, which is nearly always filled from early evening until closing time just after midnight. The paneled walls, heavy beams and well-worn wooden floors attest to the age of the tavern, and the large, flagstoned fireplace is blackened from centuries of use. Tables are a uniform polished dark-wood, magically enchanted to absorb any spilled liquid; most are big enough to seat four or five people, except for the table used by the Gang of Eight (see below).

The walls of the common room are covered with layers of bric-a-brac accumulated over the course of three centuries. Enchanted drinking mugs hang on hooks beside sculpted pieces of scrimshaw, and broken swords share space with pieces of clothes reputed to have been worn by one hero or another. Not even Muaramen is


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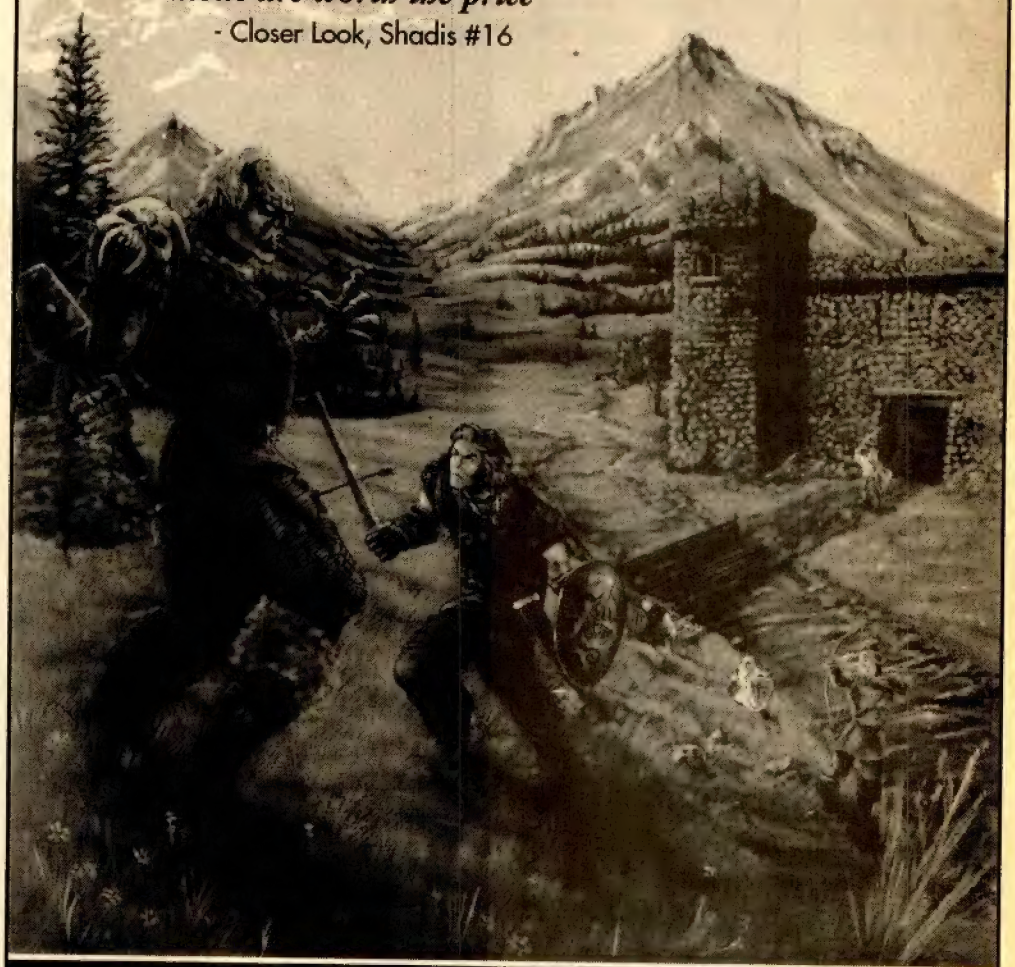

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aware of everything that passers-by have left in the tavern, and the collection is added to almost nightly.

The bar is the most recent addition to Henley's. A gift from the aquatic elves of Rimal Sea, it was exquisitely hand-crafted from greenish-white coral, and is worth a small fortune. The upper surface is flat, but the base is formed by innumerable small sculptures; they are magically protected from damage, and, rumor has it, some of the sculptures have disappeared over time, replaced by entirely new ones.

On a busy night, the Common Room can hold between 50 to 70 people. Clientele is mixed, and no race is given preference over another. Muaramen has been criticized for serving members of supposedly "evil" races, but as long as each individual behaves himself and respects the rights of the staff and other patrons, Muaramen sees no reason to deny them entry. Anyone wanting to create a scene is quickly advised to take their business elsewhere.

The food and drink are first-rate, and reasonably priced. The normal clientele includes small businessmen, sages, priests and mages of minor repute, and assorted newcomers from out of town. Most are usually proficient in their particular sphere of influence, but not arrogantly so. Players will have to head below to the Wild Side to find truly offensive people.

One of the main attractions of the Common Room are the nightly illusions provided by Muaramen. At times, patrons have eaten dinner while seeming to float above the palaces of Olympus, while others have sat in on the doomed assault on the Demonlord Adrasta's fortress. The subject matter of these illusions constantly varies, and the times are never announced. Muaramen has also been known to use ESP to determine the exploits of newcomers, and then use illusions to show the crowd their best moments. More than one reputation has been started this way.

**Guest Rooms.** Henley's has twenty-eight guest rooms, ranging from a large, private suite on the first floor to a common sleeping room on the second floor that holds twelve people in six bunks. All are well-furnished and offer free room service, but the nightly cost is relatively expensive. There is a room on the first floor that allows guests to levitate to the Wild Side without going through the garden. (Author's note: Only the rooms on the first floor are shown. The second floor can be designed as individual DMs see fit.)

**Kitchen.** Pop's kitchen is a chaotic mess of waitresses, cooks and busboys rushing in and out with trays and dishes. Pop's presides over it all, shouting above the raucous din, wielding his ever present iron ladle to emphasize his instructions. He likes to keep the room hot, to discourage loiterers.

**Lantenach's Office.** Lantenach's office is right off the common room, and is used as the security room during business hours. There are permanent wizard eyes in all common areas which allow him to keep track of any potential problems, and he can instantly contact any of the Akoran brothers. There is a teleportation room to the right of his office that connects to portals throughout the city. Special friends of Muaramen's and other important guests use it to get to Henley's, and it always guarded by one of the Akoran brothers.

**The Wild Side.** In stark contrast to the reserved, good-natured fun of the first floor, the Wild Side is loud, boisterous and irreverent. Built by Muaramen underneath Henley's main building, the Wild Side was designed to handle the increasing flow of non-city residents who pay top price for guest rooms but who want a less restricted way to blow off steam. Gamblers are welcome, and a large number of local rogues make the Wild Side their nightly meeting place. Warriors and earthy priests used to life on the frontier will be right at home in the Wild Side.

The Wild Side can be entered via a narrow stairway on the canal side of Henley's or the levitation chamber located near the wine cellar. The two main rooms have low ceilings with exposed oak beams, and there is a long, oak bar against the back wall. There are three gaming tables and a dart board in the main room, but most of the floor space is taken up by different sized tables, all of which are antiques with some historical importance to the city. They are magically protected from damage.

The secondary room has a few tables, but most of the floor space is taken up by the Pit. The Pit is legendary throughout Altimer's Cross. It is a magical arena where customers can duel each other with weapons or spells, or do battle with one of Muaramen's magical creations. The duels are teeth-rattling, floor-smashing, head-knocking affairs, but the best part is that none of the damage is permanent. Losers may be weakened when they exit the Pit, and many have woken up the next day with nasty headaches, but it's a small price to pay for wrestling a dragon with your bare hands, or proving once and for all who is the most powerful warrior in a party. All duels have to be registered with one of the Akoran brothers, and wagers can be placed beforehand.

The Wild Side is administered by the dwarf Morinskell, whose omnipresent, scowling face is a constant reminder to patrons that things won't be getting to out of hand. His office is right next to the gaming tables, but he is often out supervising contests in the Pit.

There is a large conference room behind a secret door along the back hallway. Muaramen holds staff meetings here, and often rents it out to friends who wish to meet in private. It is magically protected from all scrying attempts.

## People: Staff

**Akoran brothers:** In-house protection for Henley's is provided by the Akoran brothers, six minotaurs of steadfast loyalty and uncompromising attitudes. Four are on duty at all times, with at least one stationed near the guest quarters and teleportation area. They wear dark crimson cloaks when making their way through the tavern, and communicate via limited rings of telepathy which have a range of 100' feet. They have no sense of humor, and will forcefully escort all trouble-makers from the tavern at the first sign of a problem. All are formidable warriors, but they carry no weapons.

**Badlands Bill:** Badlands Bill is part busboy, part bellhop and part stablehand. He is human, in his mid-teens, and has a dream of one day becoming a famous warrior. He also knows the names, occupation and personal habits of most of the regulars. With contacts throughout the city, Badlands Bill knows all the current rumors and news of the city. He lives in one of the guest rooms, and can be found on the premises at nearly any time of day.

**Lantenach:** Lantenach, a childhood friend of Muaramen's, performs a number of different functions for the tavern. He is the accountant and purchasing agent for Henley's, as well as the security chief.

Lantenach is tall and heavily muscled, and a master of unarmed combat. He is quiet and will only be seen in Henley's when there is serious trouble. He occasionally does clandestine work for the government of the city, and often provides them with information on outsiders.

**Morinskell:** Morinskell is the dwarf who runs the Wild Side. He smells bad, looks worse and has a mean streak. He used to be a famed dragon wrestler, but gave it up when it became boring. Wild Side regulars know not to cross him, and his word is law. Muaramen has given him free reign to administer the area as he sees fit.

**Muaramen:** Muaramen is the middle-aged owner of Henley's. He is short, thin and bald, with a grey beard and blue eyes. A powerful mage, Muaramen retired from active adventuring when he inherited the tavern from a distant cousin, and has created all the magical attractions of Henley's. He often mingles with his guests in different guises, and is usually cheerful, talkative and always interested in news from outside the city. His friends include many of the city's most powerful business and political leaders, many of whom have direct access to the tavern. He is a member of the local chamber of commerce, and is a strong proponent of the city's well-being.

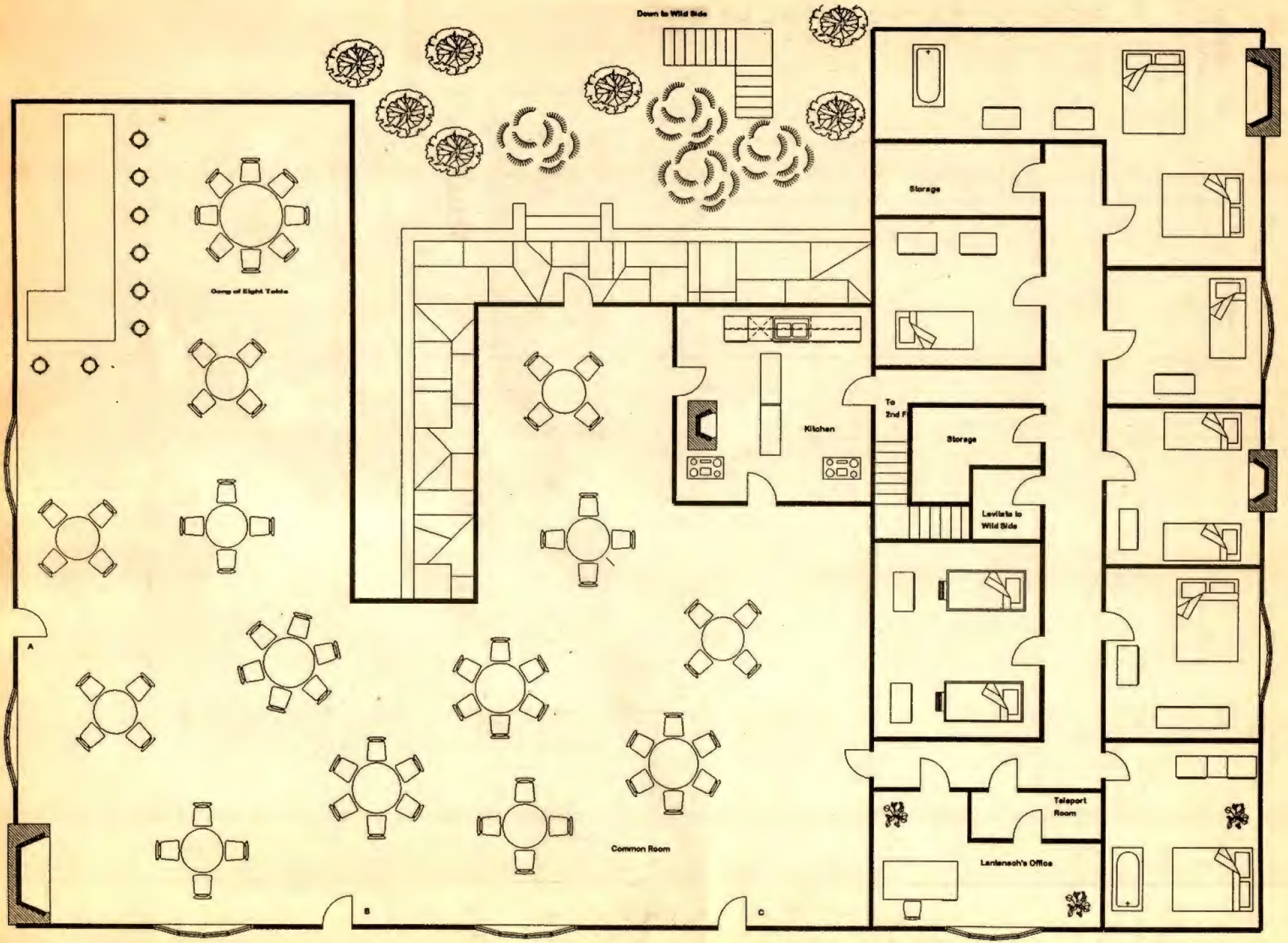
**Pops:** Pops, a half-orc, is mean-spirited, ill-tempered and prone to loud outbursts. He is also the best cook in the city. Muaramen puts up with his tantrums, which can often be overheard by patrons, because he is the consummate professional in terms of preparing food. Pops supervises a staff of twelve, which includes all the cooks and bartenders.

**Waitresses:** Henley's has seven full-time waitresses, all related to Muaramen. There are four daughters and three nieces, ranging in age from 18 to 26. All have similar features, being short and thin, with blond hair and cheerful dispositions. They are supervised by Muaramen's wife Hedda. She occasionally stops the Akoran brothers from pummeling patrons who harass the girls, but only rarely. Giving the girls trouble is the fastest way to exit the tavern.

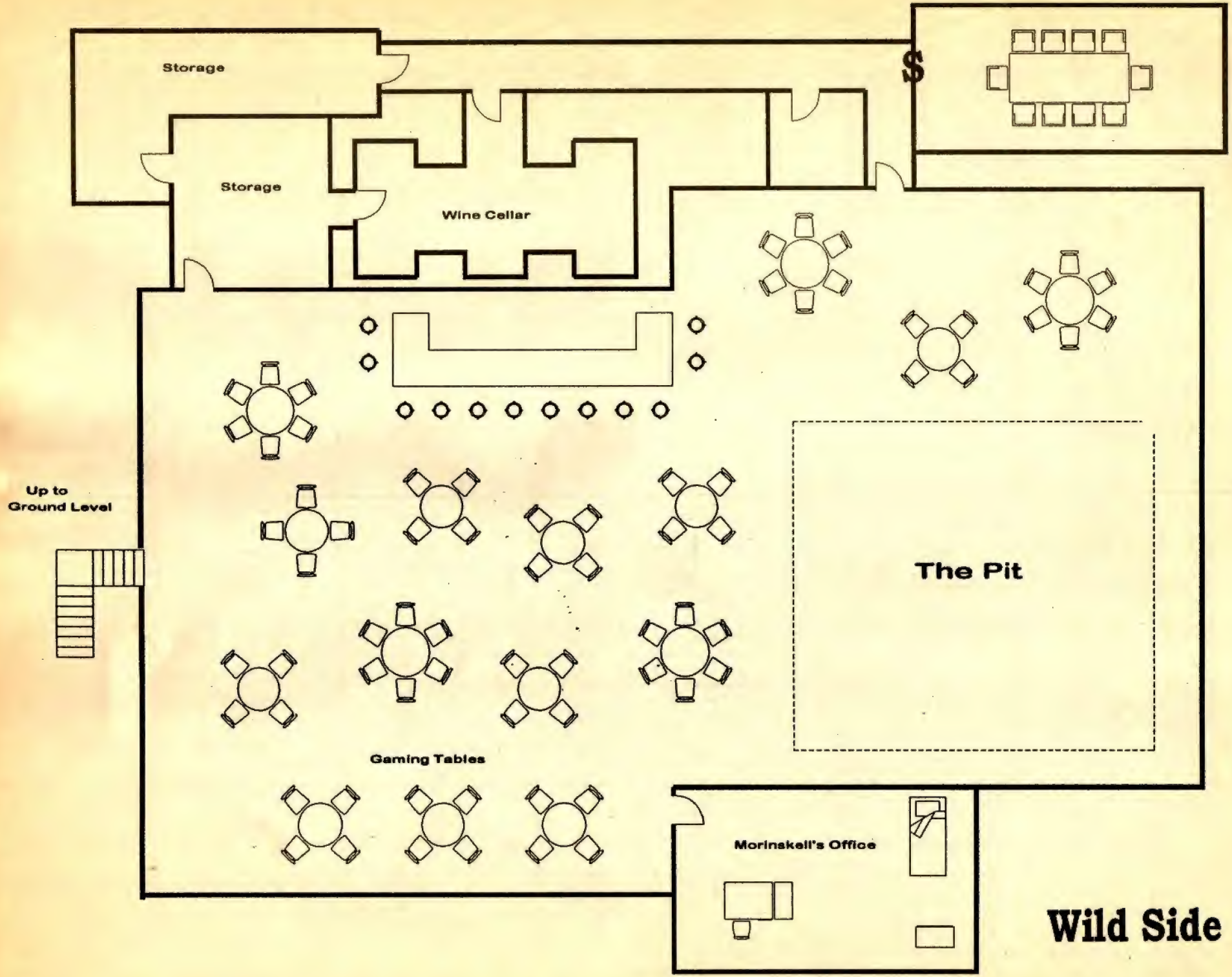
### People: Patrons

Below are only a few of the patrons that players might encounter at Henley's. DMs are encouraged to add their own unique set of characters to the tavern's roster, to give the Henley's of their campaign world a personal touch.

**Alana Wayfarer:** Alana Wayfarer is a grumpy, irritable woman who usually takes a table by the kitchen. She is middle-aged, has a round face constantly adorned by a dour expression, and is not shy about pointing out the short-comings of anyone she meets. Alana is also a fabulous healer, and one of the earliest and most loyal of Muaramen's companions. She is an itinerant priestess, attending to the needs of the farming settlements outside Altimer's Cross, but can often be found at the tav-




# Henley's - First Floor


Storage
Storage
Wine Cellar
$
Up to
Ground Level
The Pit
Gaming Tables
Morinskell's Office
Wild Side

ern. She is famous for getting into insult contests with other guests, but more often then not they are friends by the end of the night.

**Andre and Horse Prinoor:** Two of the most regular regulars are the brothers Andre and Horse Prinoor. Andre Prinoor is a skilled businessman, and works the bar for newcomers who may need help in the city.

He is a smooth talker, and willing to offer nearly any legal service for the right price. His slow-witted brother is constantly at his side, his hulking presence a deterrent to any would-be thieves.

**Dwarves:** A valuable vein of iron ore near Altimer's Cross was ceded to a dwarven mining cartel in exchange for help in renovating the city's defenses, and many of the workers make the Wild Side their nightly hang-out.

A few are diviners, magically enchanted to glow in the presence of certain types of minerals or metals, and their ambient light adds a certain festive atmosphere to their activities, which tend to be drinking contests of legendary proportions.

**Engas and Og:** Engas and Og are two bumbling rogues who have a special relationship with Morinskell — if they talk to him, he throws them out. To make up for this conversational lack, Engas and Og try to talk to anyone who will listen to them, particularly newcomers.

They discuss everything from politics to fashion to adventuring, but are primarily interested in ventures that involve their receiving money for as little work as possible. They can be overbearing and annoying, but they do have valuable contacts with the shadier side of Altimer's Cross.

**Gang of Eight:** The original Gang of Eight began their weekly meetings at Henley's over one hundred years ago, and two of the original members, both elves, still belong to it. All eight are sages of various subjects, and all are stubborn debaters. Their scholarly discussions tend to get louder as the night progresses and mugs of Henley's Inferno pile up in front of them.

They will often ask total strangers to settle their debates, and, on the rare occasions when they acknowledge an expert, an individual may be asked to join their discussions.

## Menu

Unique touches give a campaign depth, and the menu on page 14 will give players plenty of opportunity to express the individual natures of the characters they are role-playing.

Tough, hardy warriors won't be able to resist the challenge of a Henley's Inferno, and no dwarf worthy of the name will be able to pass up a pint of Pit or Rockvale Grog.

Characters can choose their personal favorites for dinner, and those who are especially persuasive may, over time, convince Pops to create a special dish for them.

Dishes and drinks marked with an * have special properties detailed below. To preserve the surprise of the player's orders, waitresses will only describe the effects in general terms.

## Food

**The Doppleganger:** Served in a crock, the doppleganger is a gray soup that does not appear very appetizing. The soup is magically altered, though, to suit the taste of each individual diner, and will always have the perfect flavor.

**Hordes of Gehenna:** Legend has it that this stew, the ingredients of which have never been revealed, was served to Knights of the Silver Hand prior to their assault on the fortress of the Demonlord Adrasta.

One survivor of the attack returned to the tavern, and gave testimony that it was the stew that gave him the strength to fight the battle; it has been a Henley's favorite ever since.

Anyone eating the stew gains 1-6 hps for one hour (the special is available for take-out, but the effects are not cumulative.) The stew can only be eaten once a week.

**The Wayfarer:** Specifically designed for travelers, this magically enhanced meal will enable diners to journey for two days without hunger. The meal itself has the consistency of beef jerky, and is dry and tasteless.

## Drinks

**Henley's Inferno:** This house favorite has a fiery taste and comes served in a mug topped with an illusionary erupting volcano. Anyone who drinks must save against half their health score or fall unconscious for 2–8 minutes. Those who save gain a point of strength for one turn. The effects are not cumulative.

**The Green Tongue:** This greenish, sweet tasting liqueur was created by Muaramen to accommodate the multi-racial character of his clientele. Anyone who drinks one can speak and comprehend all languages while on the premises.

**The Rainbow:** A fruity blend of juice and wine, the Rainbow is a favorite with the younger crowd that frequents Henley's. Anyone drinking one can belch multi-colored bubbles for about a minute, which will slowly rise to the ceiling.

**Dwarven Ale:** The three brands of Dwarven Ale available at Henley's (Headknockers, Pit and Rockvale Grog) are all strong-tasting, dark amber ales.

All are served in traditional Dwarven style, with a rock in the bottom of the mug that the drinker catches in his mouth and spits on the floor. Any non-dwarf who drinks a dwarven ale must save against their health score or become hopelessly ill. The roll is at -2 for each additional drink.

**Crivakh:** Crivakh is a soothing mead that removes the effects of any of the unique foods or drinks served at Henley's.

**Rimal Coffee:** A colorless coffee made from a plant that grows at the bottom of the Rimal Sea, Rimal coffee has a foul smell and bitter taste. It is also a powerful stimulant, and will enable the drinker to remain awake for an entire day without penalty.

However, if more then one cup is consumed in a week, resistance to the stimulant increases and the coffee will never again have the same effect.

**Dark River Wine:** This dark, nearly tasteless wine is produced by the dark elves of Tirac Nor, and its effects, magical in nature, are entirely unpredictable. Muaramen stocks the less potent variety, so the effects are not dangerous in any way.

Some drinkers have been known to shapechange into an animal form that most represents their personality, while others have gained incredible resistance to magic for nearly a day. The effects are random, and rarely permanent. ❑

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GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

# Town Generator

## A Simple, Generic Fantasy Gaming Aid

**Written by Neale Davidson**

*"Okay," the GM begins, "You've just slaughtered an Orcish horde and are on your way down the Southern Trails."*

*The players look up only mildly interested, since they are still deciding on who gets the Orcslayer sword and Shield of Evershine.*

*"Rounding the corner, you can clearly see several buildings of a small village."*

*The players suddenly snap up. "Town? Cool, I want to go to the weapons shop and sell this Orcslayer. We won't be needing that anymore." yells out one player.*

*"I want to hit the bars. It's been a long time on the road," adds another player, smiling.*

*"Guys, it's just a small town," the GM points out, a bit flustered. "Maybe fifty people in it, tops."*

*The players look at each other for a moment.*

*"It's not going to have many shops and it doesn't have a bar," the GM continues.*

*"Well," jumps in another player, "What does it have then? I want to hit someplace fun!"*

*The GM sighs heavily. He really hadn't expected so much trouble over a small routine village. He thought the players would take on supplies and simply move on. Players, as every seasoned GM knows, never do the expected.*

### Town Generation

Small towns exist everywhere. For every city found on a map, there are a dozen smaller communities waiting to be explored. Of course, the GM may not want to take the time out the develop every little town and may want to blister on through to more exciting things, designing adventures.

Here is a small generation system that creates towns of various sizes and shops found within. Town generation is accomplished in three steps.

1. Determine the size and population of the town.

2. Determine what shops exist in the community.

3. Tailor the town to fit the region it's in and to meet with the GM's tastes.

When done, the GM can quickly describe all those tiny hideaways and backwater towns the adventurers keeping stumbling across.

### Step 1: Population Size

The GM determines the population of a new town by rolling 3d6 and comparing it with Table 1. The table provides a description of town's size, as well as a range for its population.

Population results greater than allowed by the 3d6 roll are included for those GMs wanting to design larger cities from scratch. Keep in mind that in real life, few cities ever exceeded the status of Major City in medieval times, and only a handful even reached the Metropolis stage or beyond. A GM using this table to create a world should keep in mind that most large cities only had a few thousand people and those that were much larger were famous throughout the known world.

### Table 1: Population

| 3d6 Roll | Population | Businesses |
|---|---|---|
| 3-7 | Settlement<br>15-100 People | 3 |
| 8-10 | Village<br>101-300 People | 8 |
| 11-13 | Community<br>301-600 People | 12 |
| 14-15 | Town<br>601-1000 People | 15 |
| 16-17 | City<br>1001-2500 People | 20 |
| 18 | Trade City<br>2501-5000 People | 30 |
| Assigned | Major City<br>5001-10,000 People | 50 |
| Assigned | Metropolis<br>10,000 - 25,000 People | 75 |
| Assigned | Megalopolis<br>25,000 - 50,000 People | 100 |
| Assigned | City State<br>50,000+ People | 250 |

### Table 2: Businesses

Every town needs trade and commerce to survive. Once you've determined the town's population, the same result indicated how many businesses were located in the town.

Now, roll 4d6 once for each business and record the results.

### Table 2: Businesses

| Roll 4d6 | Business Type |
|---|---|
| 4 | Mail Point |
| 5 | Prison |
| 6 | Moneylender |
| 7 | Iron Forge |
| 8 | Peace Force |
| 9 | Stable |
| 10 | Docks |
| 11 | Farm |
| 12 | Mine |
| 13 | General Store |
| 14 | Inn |
| 15-16 | Bar |
| 17 | Market |
| 18 | Restaurant |
| 19 | Scholar |
| 20 | Temple |
| 21 | Herd Ranch |
| 22 | Brothel |
| 23 | Thieves' Den |
| 24 | Fort |

**Mail Point:** Not every town is well connected to the outside world. Mail Points are generally placed on border towns or in military forts so reports can be dispatched back to the realm's capitol.

**Prison:** Dungeons are not places people would go to kill monsters and gain treasure. Dungeons are dank prisons located underneath castles. Some prisons gain infamous reputations for cruelty. Others gain notoriety as inescapable. Towns with prisons and dungeons see a great deal of activity as prisoners and adventurers are transferred.

**Moneylender:** A moneylender's services can be found wherever there is wealth to be distributed. The moneylender is generally a rich man who has gained power through other people's

debts and gained wealth through interest. Moneylenders are generally found in towns with several merchant houses or in trade districts.

**Iron Forge:** These metalworks provide tools and supplies for a large area. The tools often do include weapons and metal, though small towns will find a weapon order unusual. Iron Forges mainly contribute income to a small community.

**Peace Force:** Contrary to most GMs opinions, many towns do not have any organized peace force roaming the streets. They generally only exist to keep the wealthy and politically powerful safe from the common thieves and hoodlums. The smaller the town, the less the need of a peace force. Still, peace forces could be placed in a small town to keep roads safe from brigands and where criminals have had their run for too long. In these cases, a sheriff was usually appointed.

**Stable:** These places are where men raise horses. Generally, the horses are raised for work on fields or for packing. Very few in small towns would bother raising war-horses or race-horses. They can't plow a field very well. Successful stables gain a good reputation with anyone who knows about horses, and can attract great business and wealth to a town. Adventurers would not get much use out of a stable unless they're replacing their pack horses or getting riding mounts.

**Docks:** These act as a major source of income for a town, whether the docks are on the sea or are on a river. Docks will have warehouses near them, to store goods that are to be shipped or sent out into the town. They traditionally see a good deal of activity from traders and merchants.

**Farm:** Large farms often are the mainstay of a town. A farm which exports its flood to a nearby, larger city could employ many of the people of the town to raise its crops.

**Mine:** The mine is a short lived but extremely valuable source of income. Mining towns thrive or die depending on the mines in the area. If the veins of ore run dry, the town will fade away unless it has another form of commerce to fall back on such as farms or docks.

**General Store:** Fairly common in any town, the general store is where someone could find food, seed, tools, and equipment for sale. Adventurers finding a general store in a town should stop there to restock and resupply before setting out again.

**Inn:** The mainstay of most any town, the inn is a place of rest, food and merriment. Inns attract travelers from the area and are often the center for more reliable news and exciting activity. Inns are bound to attract adventuring groups.

**Bar:** These are extremely common in towns, since they provide for easy profit as well as a focal place for most of the town's activities. It would be common for the townspeople to end their day relaxing and chatting at the local tavern.

**Market:** These are bustling centers of haggling and trade, where goods of all kinds are bought and sold in small stands and carts. They aren't as established as a general store, since the types of goods offered vary from hour to hour, but they usually indicate that a town is on a good trade route between larger cities.

**Restaurant:** A restaurant is an establishment where people go to have a fine meal. These are actually fairly rare unless the town is a small city or on a busy trade route. Restaurants are known primarily for having better food and wine than other eateries, but are also know for charging a heavier fee.

**Scholar:** A scholar could be a teacher, sage or a historian of the time. At any rate, he is regarded as the most informed man of the town, and people seek him out for advice and information.

**Temple:** A temple within a small town serves as the religious center for the surrounding area. It is also a sign of a more pious community. Small temples will either worship the major religion of the land or, in a pantheon setting, worship a god of farming or nature.

**Herd Ranch:** This type of establishment a cow or sheep ranch providing food and clothing stock. Herd Ranches tend to employ a number of people for odd-jobs and bring in a good amount of money for the town. The presence of livestock also indicates a higher quality of food in local restaurants and inns.

**Brothel:** The home of the world's oldest profession, brothels are fairly common in backwaters where they target lonely and weary travelers and merchants.

**Thieves' Den:** In some backwater towns, criminals wanted for crimes from larger metropolitan areas will seek refuge. Often they will seek each other out in seedy bars where they discuss deeds, brag about their past exploits and plan high-paying jobs. The "den" is usually fronted by another type of shop to keep away prying eyes.

**Fort:** When a fort is in a town, it's generally the main reason for the existence of the town. Forts are technically self-sufficient, but the soldiers inside contribute great wealth to the surrounding town.

## Suiting to Fit

When the basic stats of the town have been generated, the GM should detail the setting to fit his campaign and personal tastes. A town with a brothel is not likely to exist in a heavily religious community — at least not openly. A town with a dock won't appear in the middle of the desert. GMs should change what doesn't make sense and add whatever details seem appropriate.

When the town is completed, the GM will have a good representation of what's in the town and should be able to handle all those unexpected requests from his players as they loot and pillage his world. ❑

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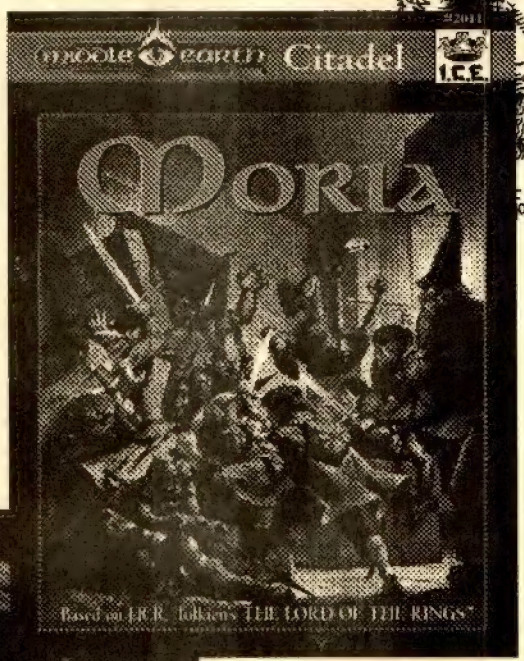


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# Without Let Or Hindrance

## Travel Papers in Role-Playing Games

**By P. J. Masters © 1995, Illustrated by Lorelle Ahlstrom © 1995**

*"Her Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State requests and requires in the Name of Her Majesty all those whom it may concern to allow the bearer to pass freely without let or hindrance, and to afford the bearer such assistance and protection as may be necessary."*

One of the more enjoyable things about traveling on a British passport is the text on the inside front cover, quoted above, which has been known to scare junior officials witless. The vague sense that your government is prepared to send a gunboat to get even with any petty jobsworth who slows you down is nice, even if almost no-one takes it seriously. But a role-player, contemplating such a document, ought to start thinking about this whole subject. Most campaigns seem to involve a certain amount of international travel, of one sort or another, and that activity is traditionally associated with border guards and minor officials demanding to see "your papers please". Paying some attention to where such "papers" come from is a small but useful way of increasing the sense of realism and detail in a campaign.

### The Idea of a Passport

The idea of a standardized passport, as something that almost any citizen of a fairly free country can get hold of which a little routine paperwork, seems to be quite modern; it's hard to find any references to such things earlier than the nineteenth century. In ancient and medieval times, the usual assumption was that a nation

and its rulers could do what they liked to any foreigner who ventured across their borders.

The could certainly grant or refuse permission for such outsiders to enter their territory, and "passport" seems originally to have meant "entry permit" — literally, "permission to pass through a port". However, this kind of thing creates inefficiency and difficulties in organizing trade, and even the most thuggish of kings can often be persuaded of the potential advantages of (taxable) commerce.

And so, gradually, nations came to agree that they would recognize and respect documents issued by other nations to their citizens. Still, this requires a level of bureaucratic efficiency rare until the last couple of centuries.

On the other hand, the more general idea of a set of documents that will get a traveler past guards at a border must be just as old as the idea of nations and rulers. In truly barbaric times, when any border guards are most likely illiterate, there may not be much point to passports, but once any sort of bureaucracy develops, travelers will need something that the bureaucrats can understand.

The best sort of "passport" to have, in most cases, is a letter or similar from a powerful ruler or group, declaring that you are traveling on official business, and hence that your safety is a matter of national concern. The very best version of this is a letter from the local overlord, declaring you an honored guest; few bureaucrats will want to push their luck after seeing that.

According to Marco Polo, his father and uncle, who had traveled to the court of Kublai Khan, were given a special "passport" by the great ruler — a tablet of gold, engraved with orders that they were to pass unmolested throughout the Mongol Empire. Kublai was sending them back to Europe to bring emissaries from the Pope, a mission of potential importance to the history of the world.

So the Polos traveled all the way from China to Europe (via the Middle East) and back — although the Pope's envoys dropped out early on the return trip.

For all their legendary savagery, the Mongols maintained law and order throughout their lands, and also way-stations for messengers and officials, to which the golden tablet presumably gave the Polo family access. PCs who could acquire such a permit before setting out on a journey would be fortunate indeed — but the chance should be fairly slim.

Almost as good as this sort of thing is a letter from your own government, appointing you as their representative. In modern times, diplomats receive considerable protection under international law, and can even claim immunity to local laws; in earlier eras, even the most arrogant of tyrants would usually treat emissaries from a neighboring lord with some care — or at least would want to hear them out before maltreating them. (It didn't always work, of course; one stunningly stupid king of Burma allegedly executed a group of Mongol envoys for failing to remove their shoes quickly enough in his presence.)

One step down from that might be a letter from some noble or rich trader, vouching for your good name; not every local official or guard will trust such, but it's a whole lot better than nothing. By the "Age of Exploration", bold characters venturing in little-known regions might have a charter from some governmental or private research group (such as a university or "geographical society"), stating their mission. It's always wise to come prepared with a plausible story when wandering in unknown lands with survey equipment and probably weapons, given the possibility of being taken for a spy.

Passports are still going strong, and computerized systems are giving them new features; in the near future, many may incorporate bar-code or magnetic strip, carrying extensive personal information on the bearer (and making the passport harder to forge).

On the other hand, they are a symbol of bureaucracy and obstructionism, and supra-national organizations like to talk about getting rid of them; the European Community, for example, is currently trying to open its frontiers up for all its members' citizens. In the future — well, who knows? In a corporate-dominated cyberpunk world, an employers' ID card might be passport enough at whatever frontiers remains, while an interstellar space-opera campaign could involve high-tech identity systems marked with the user's DNA "signature".

## Professional Papers

The medieval Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta, who covered 75,000 miles in his remarkable lifetime, faced a subtly different situation from the Polos, and could produce a different solution. Many (but by no means all) of his journeys were within the lands controlled by Islam, where national borders were not considered overwhelmingly important; being a Muslim was citizenship enough. However, local lords could still be suspicious of rootless wanderers, and there was the small matter of earning a living.

Fortunately, though, early in his career, Ibn Battuta had studied Muslim theology in the colleges of Damascus, in Syria, and there he had earned qualifications which enabled him to work as a religious teacher anywhere in the Muslim world. Islam teaches great respect for scholarship, and religious knowledge is especially respected; it seems that Ibn Battuta was usually able to find work as a teacher, or as some kind of government official or advisor, in most of the Muslim lands he visited.

This opens up possibilities related to the less formal sorts of "letters of introduction" already mentioned. Anything that adds to a traveler's plausibility and backs up the story they might wish to tell an official is worth having. If such papers also help the wanderer earn a living, they are very useful indeed. For example, a license to practice as a physician, if it's recognized internationally, could be flourished to good effect. ("I wish to study the arts of healing in many lands. Furthermore, if your laws permit me to ply my trade, I am prepared to help the sick here, too.") The upcoming **GURPS Celtic** describes — in detail — the Druid Order, a religious and scholarly body that enables characters of a priestly, philosophical, or poetical bent to wander at whim across a war-prone and "barbaric" land, receiving not only safe conduct, but also vast respect.

Of course, some countries are unhappy with the idea of penniless visitors wandering in, either to become a drain on local welfare schemes, or to take work away from the country's own citizens. Hence, one useful item of paperwork in many more sophisticated ages is proof of financial security — say, a letter from your bank or equivalent. Alternatively, a note from a local employer who is willing to take you on — accompanied, if necessary,

by permits to work in that land from the local government — can be effective.

Some jobs give a character obvious reasons to travel; one of the best in modern-world games is "reporter". A Press Pass, combined with a plausible story, has been the excuse of choice in many a modern–day adventure plot. However, there are obviously two sides to this; reporters are notoriously nosy, so local officials may well pay them special attention. Occasionally, this attention may become lethal.

### Visas

A passport, in the modern sense, is a general identification document, issued by the bearer's home nation. Often times, however, countries wish to control which foreigners come visiting them, and so they issue specific permits for this — which are known as visas.

Visas are largely a modern phenomenon, although they closely resemble the original "passports"; they can only really exist if communications and bureaucracy are good enough for diplomats from the destination country to handle issuing them from embassies and such with reasonable efficiency. They are also often slightly controversial, as they imply that the government demanding them feels some blanket distrust for foreigners, and they require a fair amount of extra work for officials and travelers alike.

Even the USA, which has often been more stringent about running a visa system than most countries, has relaxed its approach in recent years; many European nationals can now get into the country without visas, by filling in a short form on the spot.

In an adventure plot, a visa requirement makes a useful way of foreshadowing elements of the situation that the travelers are about to get into. The mere fact that they need a visa will tell them that they are facing a bureaucratic, probably cautious, possibly paranoid government; a visit to an embassy or consulate to pick it up can suggest to them some of the country's concerns — are the officials anxious for trade, say, or do they issue a lot of warnings against bringing "subversive literature" on the trip? Delays and obstruction at this point can also be a good way to slow the adventurers down, if the plot demands it.

### Internal Passports

One good rule-of-thumb sign of a tyranny — or at least an arrogant, autocratic government — is that it may control trade inside its own borders, even for its own citizens. Such control must be administered, of course, and so the "internal passport" comes into being. Travel passes, made of wood, were required (for non-Samurai at least) in medieval Japan — and were very hard to obtain for any purpose other than pilgrimages. In modern times, Communist Russia and other, similar states have imposed similar systems.

Apart from enabling the government to monitor travelers and generally keep track of the population, a system of internal passports can be used to enforce "internal exile" as a form of punishment and restraint. Russian dissidents "sent to Siberia" were not always placed in prison

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camps; simply being forced to live in a remote industrial town in a sub-Arctic region, with no friendly visitors, could be control enough.

Foreigners (and native citizens of uncertain loyalty) may well be kept away from whole areas of a country, especially in modern, industrialized, militarist states. Sometimes, the reasons for this may be quite open: "We are sorry, comrade, but that town is the location of People's Tank Factory Number Seven, and you will understand that every nation is obliged to exert control over such things." On the other hand, sometimes a government won't want to even admit to the reason for the restriction — which can make for an interesting mix of cerebral and "action" adventure, as curious visitors attempt to puzzle out What's Going On without being spotted as trouble and Dealt With (somehow) by the local authorities.

Of course, some authorities may not exert too much control over travel to some areas, to avoid inspiring suspicion — but what limitations they do exert will then have to be very carefully judged. Espionage scenarios can get very subtle indeed at this point.

In any case, "internal travel" papers of some kinds are not always the mark of a tyranny, and they can be very useful. Characters traveling around a country on official business may carry papers identifying them and their mission, especially if the country (or empire) is large and diverse, and communications are poor.

Furthermore, many large nations and empires have been known to operate systems of shelters and hostelries for their officials, on the grounds that this is a cost-effective way of ensuring their efficiency and safety. (However, such shelters may tend to be fairly sparse, with only a skeleton staff to maintain them.)

Thus official travel papers may act as permits to claim free use of such places; perhaps even transportion, from a change of horses at a messenger relay station to free travel on trains. So remember, the next time your fantasy RPG PCs are hired by the Emperor of Blah to investigate strange doings on the borders, ask for a formal letter of appointment. It may well save you money as well as hassle from the Blah officials.

## Complications

**Entry Stamps:** Many countries stamp the passports of visitors on entry. This has the practical advantage of helping them keep track of visitors, but from the visitor's point of view, it may have drawbacks. At the very least, nosy third parties who gain access to their passports can work out much about their recent movements; at worst, country 'B' may be actively suspicious or even hostile towards anyone who has had anything to do with some enemy country 'A'. Thus, passports embellished with entry stamps, or with visas for that matter, may be a problem as well as a status symbol.

**Proof of Identity:** Countries that require their citizens to carry identity documents usually regard foreigners' passports as the equivalent. In such countries, the police are usually entitled to require anyone they deal with to show their papers. It's generally a good idea to carry a passport on you at all times when traveling abroad; in this sort of country, it's virtually a necessity.

Of course, a passport can also be a useful "identity document" for all sorts of minor purposes — such as cashing cheques.

**Letting Go of a Passport:** Sometimes, officials ask to hold on to characters' passports when the latter get into trouble, or merely when they (say) enter a controlled area, however legitimately. Most characters — most people — regard such requests with deep suspicion; this can lead to a few moments of interestingly tense role-playing in a game.

It's also worth remembering that people who are suspected of involvement in some kind of criminal behavior in their home country, but without enough evidence for them to be charged, or who are released on bail before a trial, may be asked or required to surrender their passports "until the matter is resolved".

## Game Considerations

Mostly, passports and paperwork are something that GMs can and should handle "on the fly", and in any case, it's possible to go too far with such things; few players enjoy spending hours role-playing their way through red tape. However, it is sometimes possible and useful for matters relating to travel paperwork to show up on a character sheet.

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Point allocation systems such as **GURPS** or the **Hero System** often permit characters to spend points to obtain character "Advantages", and useful papers may qualify. This is to some extend a matter of taste and campaign style; in a game-world where everyone has a passport, or can obtain one very easily, it really isn't worth going to too much trouble over the topic. On the other hand, a "universal pass" such as the Polos carried shouldn't be handed out without something in the way of either game-world effort or game-mechanical cost.

In a game system with reaction modifier rules (such as **GURPS**), "correct papers" are usually worth a bonus when rolling for official responses — how much being up to the GM. (Or, to put it another way, incorrect papers lead to negative effects.) On the other hand, papers that show one to have been in an enemy nation recently will earn a penalty from both bureaucrats and patriotic types — and the former will also usually penalize anyone bearing invalid or incomplete papers. In fact, the passport may simply be the physical embodiment of what **GURPS** would term a Reputation.

The **Hero System** treats possession of a passport as a 1-point perk, but something that most people can obtain with a little time and effort really shouldn't cost even that. One possibility is to regard this Perk as a long-duration passport with lots of long-term visas, vaccination certificates, and similar stamps and attached papers. It could also be something like a UN passport, which suggest that the bearer has some kind of semi-official status within this major organization. "Diplomatic Immunity" in the same system costs 5 points; this should certainly include a diplomatic passport. "International Police Powers" have the same cost, and should carry a similar side-benefit. A Press Pass is valued at one point, and this may be a reasonable guide as to the fair point value for many other relatively minor "papers".

**GURPS,** on the other hand, doesn't generally charge points for transient things such as passports, but there are several **GURPS** Advantages that may be significant in deciding whether or not a character has a passport to hand, or how easily they can obtain one. Characters with high Status are usually more likely to have traveled abroad in the past, and high Wealth makes it easier to pay the fees for such things; a low-status beggar will almost certainly not have a passport. If a character has Military Rank, they may, in some but all nations and periods, have been posted abroad — which may have led to them being given a passport they can use at other times; the same sometimes goes for characters with Clerical Investment, and almost certainly applies to anyone with "international" Legal Enforcement Powers.

**GURPS** International Super Teams included "Diplomatic Immunity" as a 5-point Advantage. This gives a character a high level of immunity to local laws — and certainly implies that they have a diplomatic passport. GMs should note, however, that this Advantage is always linked to a high-level Duty to the character's government (or a high-powered international body such as the UN), and that governments tend to get very, very annoyed with anyone embarrassing them by abusing this status. (In fact, they just might prefer to waive the claim to immunity in the case of a diplomatic who does something that they can't begin to justify or excuse. Alternatively, they might try the erring individual under their own laws.)

GMs wishing to assign **GURPS** points values to special papers such as those carried by the Polos or Ibn Battuta should base it on two factors; the Reaction Modifier they provide (if any), and any Social Status or other Advantages that they embody. A special document should be treated as a "Reputation" that affects a large group (usually "officials", or "citizens of a particular country"), with a special modifier; "only when the NPC sees the document". This would mean reducing the point value by $^1/_2$, as the documents will often be out of sight, may get lost, and so on — but if the PCs will usually be able (for a positive modifier) or forced (for a negative one) to show them to officials, this reduction should be dropped.

Thus the Polos' golden tablet could be called "+3 Reputation among loyal servants of Kublai Khan's Empire, only if the document is shown and read", for a total of +4 points (the reduction is definitely justified here, especially as not all Mongols may have been literate). A modern Diplomatic Passport might be worth "+1 Reac-


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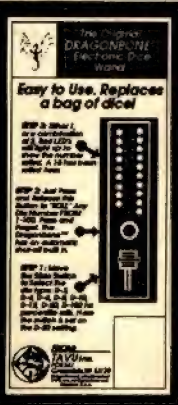


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tion on 10 or less from all officials who see the document" (a large group), for +1 point — as well as giving Diplomatic Immunity (for another +5). Mostly, it's the Diplomatic Immunity that's important; officials have to respect that, like it or not. However, a few of them will snap to attention a notch faster when dealing with a foreigner waving a special passport around — hence the +1. A licensed physician (with the skills to justify the status) pays no points for the license, but may pay for a level or so of status or wealth, and has access to a Comfortable job in most societies.

The same goes for something like Ibn Battuta's qualifications as a Muslim scholar, although they were doubtless rarer in his society than medical qualifications in ours. In game terms, he would almost certainly have a small positive Reputation, at least among his fellow scholars.

**Illegal Activity:** Characters with forgery skills may wish to attempt to create bogus paperwork, and this is usually possible — although government naturally try to make it very difficult.

Leaving aside questions of high-tech features such as magnetic strips (which could be the subject of an article in themselves), the problems include obtaining paper and the like resembling the real thing, which is often printed in intricate patterns; blank passports are usually guarded very carefully in the places where they are held (giving them a high value on the black market). Creating a fake passport that can stand up to extended investigation is very difficult indeed, as "the system" will usually use detailed records, duplicate pictures, cross-referenced serial numbers and the like.

Hence, real-world criminals are more likely to use fraud or theft than forgery — or at least, to combine two or three of these techniques.

Apart from simply stealing a unfortunate traveler's papers and altering them as necessary (something that international travelers often have to be alert for), well-known tricks include adopting the identity of a person born at around the right time; bureaucracies may not cross-reference their records of births and deaths when issuing passports. (The well-known thriller *Day of the Jackal* brought this trick to widespread public notice.)

Characters who are caught with "incorrect papers," whatever the cause, from unsuccessful forgery to neglecting to bribe corrupt officials, can expect a fair amount of trouble — how much, and for how long, depends on many different factors.

It may simply be a question of taking a few minutes to "straighten things out" (legally or otherwise), or the lapse may lead characters to be arrested, placed under heavy guard by incorruptible officials, searched with great care, and then locked away for a lengthy period — at which point, they are likely to start considering comparably illegal (or other) ways of getting out. The GM who thinks a little about PCs and their passports can find whole long-term scenarios developing. ❑

# MAD DOG CITY

By Jim Parks © 1995
Illustrated by Lorelle Ahlstrom © 1995

In **Werewolf: The Apocalypse**, Garou generally avoid the city. Sure, the Glass Walkers, and to a lesser degree the Bone Gnawers, have made peace with the urban environment, but Garou are creatures of open fields and forests.

What a Lupus thing to say. You must be spending a lot of time with the Red Talons. While it's uncommon for Garou to rule mortal cities like the Kindred, it's not unheard of. Humanity is largely urban, clustered in cities large and small. These urban areas continue to expand while natural areas are ever shrinking. Towns become cities, which become metroplexes, which merge into sprawling megaplexes.

Look at the East Coast of the United States. With the growth of the cities, some Garou have decided that the best way to fight the Wyrm is to control humanity's destructive impulses by controlling humanity. Sound familiar? That means ruling the cities.

And risking becoming tainted by the Wyrm.

## The Old Guard

Now, for a thousand years the Garou did rule humanity. Some would argue that the greatest mistake the Garou ever made in their defense of Gaia was ending the Impergium. Those who would reimpose the Impergium form the vast majority of Garou who rule human cities. Among the Garou, they are known as *The Old Guard*.

The Old Guard rule their cities for one reason alone — to control the human population. The means through which they maintain control are ruthless and savage; whatever works. Human populations are made to live in constant fear and want. The Garou attempt to keep their human subjects poor, ignorant and oppressed. But things don't always work out the way the Old Guard expect.

Cairo, the capital of Egypt, is a classic example of a city ruled by the Old Guard, and how such rule routinely fails to break the human spirit. Supported by the Garou, the Egyptian elite ruthlessly oppress the common people of Cairo. Ignorance, disease and malnutrition are commonplace. But Cairo's population continues to increase, straining even the Garou's resources, and a growing fundamentalist opposition to the rule of the Egyptian

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elite is a direct reaction to Old Guard repression. The Old Guard have their hands full. As a result, Cairo is surprisingly livable.

Cairo wastes nothing. For an urban environment, the city is a model of economy and efficiency. While Cairo is a brutal city, the rule of the Garou is not without its positive side. What may appear to Western eyes as squalor is in many cases people living in harmony with their environment. In this respect, Cairo is a very natural city, blending the ancient and the modern into a seamless whole. This is the urban reflection of the Garou's desire to live as one with Gaia. The Old Guard look with pride upon their work and argue that it is a model for denying the Wyrm its urban strongholds.

If the truth be told, the Old Guard of Cairo have a grudging respect for, even pride in, the resiliency of their human subjects. Maybe you can teach an old dog. . . .

Kindred and Mages in Old Guard cities either acquiesce to Garou authority or they die. It's that simple. Usually, they die. Cairo is somewhat different in that a remarkable degree of tolerance has been demonstrated by the Garou. A substantial population of Kindred and Mages reside in the city, living in relative peace. While challenges to Garou supremacy are not uncommon and the city is a hotbed of political maneuvering, Garou control is strong and they have made no move to completely wipe out their would be rivals. This is certainly an exception, not the rule. Perhaps, the Old Guard are spread too thin and dare not risk their control in a prolonged fight.

### The New Wave

In contrast to the Old Guard, Garou known as the New Wave rule their cities in an attempt to save humanity from itself and enlist mortal aid in the struggle against the Wyrm. New Wave sovereigns try to be as progressive as possible and tame humanity's destructive tendencies. The New Wave seeks to live in harmony with humankind. Disappointments are common.

Minneapolis and St. Paul are New Wave cities. Compared to many urban areas of similar size, the Twin Cities are clean, safe and prosperous. They are also remarkably green with many lakes and parks. While not a paradise, the Cities are quite forward-thinking and they have the New Wave Garou rulers to thank for it.

Now, to all appearances, rival Kindred Princes rule Minneapolis and St. Paul. So much for appearances. In reality, the Garou control the balance of power. For once, the tables have been turned on the Leeches. The Garou are manipulating the Kindred conflict with an eye to diffusing it and ultimately ridding the entire area of Cainites. It's funny how those political struggles always seem to go nowhere, while weakening both sides.

Vampires in New Wave cities lead a precarious existence. The Garou rulers are not entirely averse to Kindred so long as they keep their heads and numbers down. Minneapolis/St. Paul is a good example of how New Wave rulers deal with entrenched Kindred. Unfortunately, the Red Talons and Wendigo in the area are not content to play the waiting game, and some Gangrel have begun to suspect that all is not what it seems. How much longer the New Wave can rule from the shadows remains to be seen.

Mages are actively courted by New Wave Garou as potential allies. Some Garou are even willing to share power if the Mages treat them with respect. Alliances with Dreamspeakers and Verbena have proven the most productive and lasting. Both these groups share the Garou's respect for the natural world. In turn, the Garou see the Technocracy as another of the Wyrm's abominations. In Minneapolis and St. Paul, if the Garou rulers are forced into open conflict with the Kindred, the cities' small population of mages may become the powerbrokers.

### The Shadow Lords

A third group of Garou rulers are the Shadow Lords. They have and will continue to rule. Born to power, Shadow Lords have the longest unbroken tradition of ruling human cities of any of the tribes. Shadow Lord rule is about power, nothing more. In this respect, they are most like the Kindred in their political manuverings. If they stopped to think about it, most Shadow Lords would be shocked by

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the close similarities. It's best not to mention this to them if you want to continue breathing.

Singapore is a classic Shadow Lord city: well-organized, clean, neat, a little dull and totally despotic. Nothing happens that is not supposed to happen. The human population is carefully managed and controlled. Behind the scenes, the Shadow Lords vie for power among themselves but will unite to confront any challenge to their collective authority. Whether Gaia is well served by this situation is an open question.

Vampires do not exist in the domain of the Shadow Lords. Leeches are an affront to Garou honor by their very existence. Shadow Lords, who see themselves as Gaia's supreme warriors, will not suffer such insults. Whether or not Shadow Lords are truly Gaia's supreme warriors, there can be no question they are among the finest vampire hunters.

Mages are a different matter. They are powerful but essentially human. The Shadow Lords tend to ignore them as much as possible. They may live — for now.

## Story Ideas

Once we accept the possibility of Garou ruling cities, it's fun to imagine how characters will react when presented with such a situation. Here are some possibilities.

### First Time in the Big City?

Players will not expect Garou to be running a city. This element of surprise can provide some great roleplaying as player expectations are turned on their ear. Once characters get used to the idea, there still remain the different styles of Garou rule with which they must contend. Nothing says all Garou in a city will be of a mind. A three-cornered fight between the Old Guard, New Wave and the Shadow Lords can be really entertaining — and dangerous.

### Bones of Contention

Kindred looking to make a fresh start in a new city run by the Garou can make for a hot time. Similarly, if Garou are

making a move on a Kindred-held city, it need not be a standup fight to the finish but could be a game of political move and counter move. And you thought **Vampire: The Masquerade** was the political game.

### Well Met By Moonlight

In a city like Cairo, Garou, Kindred and Mages can come together in a single Chronicle that need not necessarily devolve into a slug fest. In Kindred-held cities, the Garou will be trying to destroy the Leeches. Once in power, the Garou are more likely to try to achieve larger goals than just staking the vampires, though that might prove necessary. When Garou are running things, keeping humanity in check and Gaia safe is far more important and time-consuming than vampire hunting, unless you are a Shadow Lord.

This raises the possibility of Kindred and Garou working together against common foes. Only roleplayers need apply. ❑


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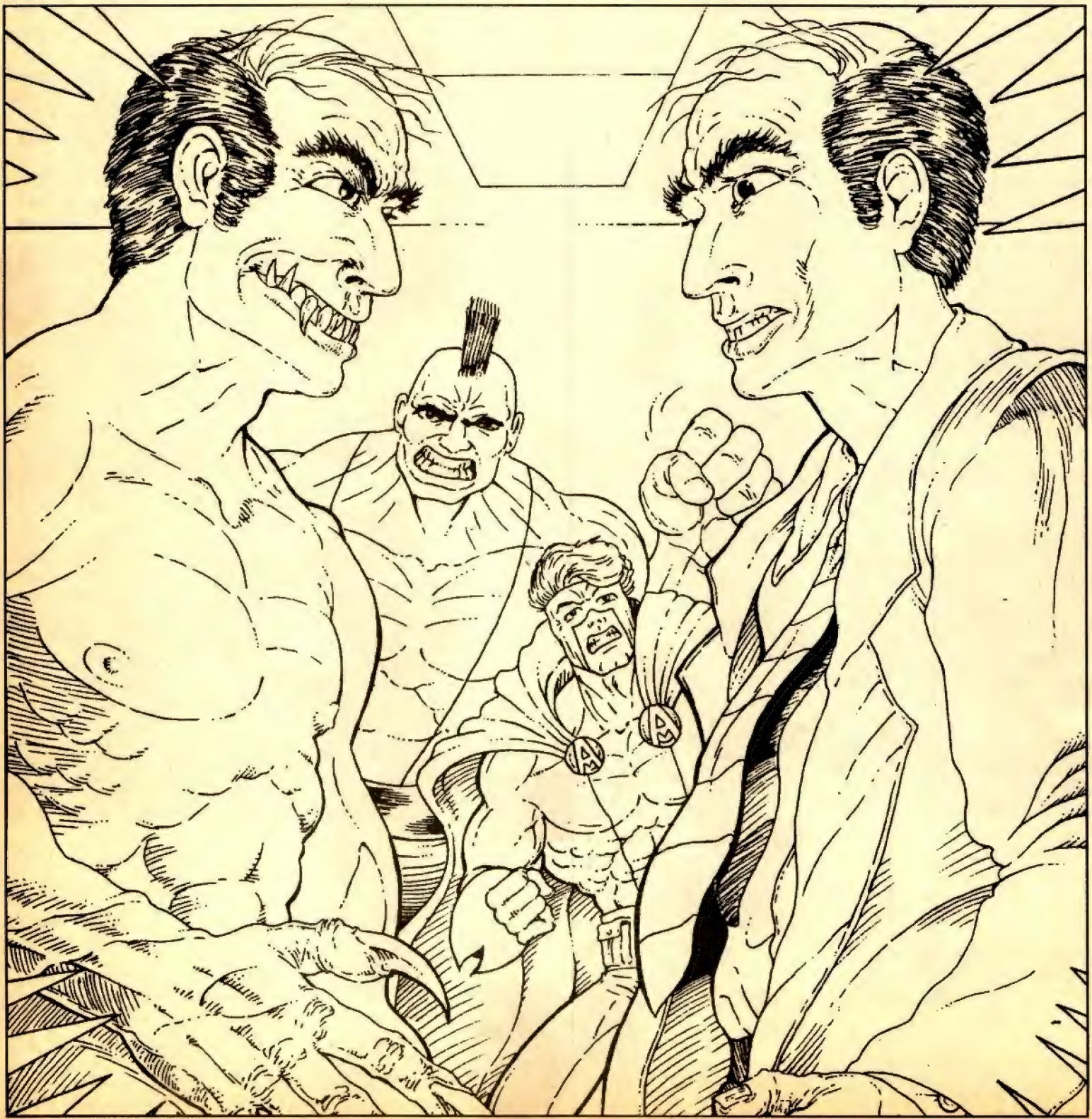
# Reflections

## An Adventure for Hero Games' Champions

By Chris Avellone © 1995, Illustrated by Brad McDevitt © 1995



## Setting The Stage

Carmine couldn't believe what he was seeing. His face was a ghostly reflection on the observation booth window as he watched what was transpiring in the lab beyond.

With morbid fascination, his eyes tracked the monstrosity as it shambled off the table and slumped to the floor. After a minute, the creature lifted itself up onto its hands and knees, and its hollow eye sockets scanned the interior of the laboratory. As Dr. Carmine watched, it drew its scarred hands across the floor, feeling the texture of the tiles.

Carmine was amazed that the form could even move; the pain must be unbearable. The patient, Antonio Diaz, suffering from a spinal injury, had been the first volunteer for Medtech's prototype Regeneration Tank; the project had looked like a success until a chemical leak had occurred during treatment, setting fire to the nutrient tank he had been placed in. The flames had scarred him terribly and drove him into a coma. It had been Director Stallings' suggestion that Diaz be kept in the Bioscience Wing until he awoke from his coma.

Apparently, their patient had woken up.

Carmine turned as the door to the observation booth opened, and Stallings rushed in, followed by a security guard. The guard's hand reached for the handle of his gun as he glanced past Carmine into the operating room beyond. Stallings followed the guard's gaze. "Oh God." The creature was running its hands along the entrance door to the observation booth. "How strong is the door?" Stallings asked Carmine. The guard reached for his walkie-talkie and began to request back-up.

"What is he doing?" Carmine asked tersely, ignoring Stallings and looking at the guard. When the Director didn't answer him, Carmine grabbed him by the arm. "What are you going to do — pump a few shots into him and hope he gets better?" Stallings threw off Carmine's arm and was about to reply when there was a hissing sound from the door. Everyone became silent. Through the window, Carmine watched the creature's hands turn into claws and sink into the metal of the door.

The creature's upper body and arms swelled as extra muscle tissue formed under the skin, and with a hiss, the creature began to press against the steel door. The guard drew his gun as the door to the operating room collapsed outward with a crash.

"Everyone get out of here," the security guard ordered. "We've got men on the way that can handle this." Stallings and Carmine moved hesitantly towards the door as the guard leveled his gun at the creature. Carmine examined the creature closely, detached from what was going on around him. The creature's mottled skin was shifting as he watched, its hollow eyes locked with his. It slowly moved towards him, and the guard raised his pistol as the creature advanced.

"My God, don't shoot him. Don't provoke him, whatever you do." Carmine whispered, sweat forming on his brow. The thing was inches away from him now... the smell coming from its body was like formaldehyde, only stronger. As Carmine watched, the creature's face began to change; he fought down an urge to vomit as its skin became dark, black hair grew from its scalp, and its abdomen swelled to match Carmine's girth. In less than a minute, he was looking at himself, naked.

The creature's mouth opened, revealing fangs, and its clawed hand reached for Carmine's face.

A gunshot went off, and the creature's mirrored features melted back into the flesh. Fangs extended, the creature whirled on the security guard, who continued to fire frantically at it. Carmine turned and scrambled for the intercom. There was a crash from behind him as the guard was hurled against the wall, clutching a bleeding stump.

Carmine turned on the intercom, his hands shaking. "This is Dr. Carmine in the first floor Bioscience laboratory! Request medical assistance immediately! This is an emergency! I repeat, this is a medical emergency!"

Carmine turned from the intercom, and found himself face-to-face with himself. The creature opened its mouth, displaying its fangs with a low, menacing hiss.

"E-mer-gen-cy."

## Introduction

*Reflections* is a rampage scenario for Champions, suitable for any number of heroes of any power level. If the majority of the characters are high-tech heroes or mages, the GM should modify Mockery's statistics in order for him to be a challenge for his foes.

Weeks before the beginning of *Reflections*, Antonio Diaz, a researcher at a local Medical Research Facility, was the victim of a chemical leak from a Regeneration Tank being tested at Facility. The regenerative agent used in the Tank's design was capable of stimulating the growth and restoration of living tissue: Diaz's exposure to the agent has given him the power to duplicate the physiology of other organisms. Unfortunately, the chemical leak also burned Diaz's body beyond recognition and caused severe brain damage, and Diaz has reverted to an animalistic state. The characters enter the picture when Diaz attempts to escape from the hospital.

This adventure requires little preparation on the part of the GM; it can be used as a super-powered manhunt, dragged out over several evenings, or added to an existing campaign as an intermission or one-night stand.

## Background

Months ago, Antonio Diaz, the victim of a hit and run, was placed in a Medtech™ prototype Regenerative Tissue Chamber. The "Regeneration Tank" bathed the patient in a chemical byproduct taken from the body of an elderly paranormal who possessed the power of limited regeneration. The paranormal had donated her body to science after she had contracted cancer, and at the time of the adventure, Medtech™ researchers had succeeded in isolating enough of the agent from her circulatory system to begin using it in an experimental Regeneration Tank (added amounts of the regeneration agent is also held in a few storage tanks within the facility; it slowly reproduces itself over time, although other methods of replicating the fluid have failed).

The extracted regenerative agent had the ability to "mimic" living tissue and replicate it, essentially rebuilding a patient's epidermal layers, nervous system and damaged muscle tissue as long as it was exposed to a sample of the patient's DNA. It was hoped the Regeneration Tank, priced modestly at several hundred thousand dollars, would be commercially available to treat burn victims and cancer patients. Diaz, wounded several weeks earlier, was the Regen Tank's first human subject. He remained unconscious in the tank for several weeks as the regenerative

agent began to slowly replace his damaged tissue.

Unfortunately, a flaw in the Tank's design resulted in a chemical leak; the regenerative agent, when stored in its undiluted state and separated from a host body, combusts at high temperatures. When the chemical leak spread past the temperature-controlled storage unit on the Tank, the agent ignited, setting fire to Diaz while he was in the chemical bath. The researchers, acting quickly, saved Diaz, but not before the burns had claimed 90% of his skin tissue, and he had fallen into a coma from the pain.

Diaz remained in Medtech's Bioscience Wing for months without regaining consciousness, and the Director of the facility, Dr. Stallings, kept the incident quiet out of fear, both of losing his job and destroying the marketing strategy for Regeneration Tank. Stallings has accepted the rationalization that Diaz was an isolated case and future experiments will be more successful. Soon after the accident, he ordered guards placed around the Bioscience wing and began to install security measures in the Hospital to cover up the Regeneration Tank's failure.

The new security and the presence of firearms has angered doctors and staff alike, and has created a stir in the hospital . . . as well as a burning curiosity for what was transpiring in the Bioscience lab. (If the GM wishes, the new security may have attracted the notice of a criminal organization in the Campaign City. The criminal organization may attempt to sneak into the facility and discover what is being stored there. They may be the ones responsible for Diaz "waking up.")

An hour before the adventure began, Diaz awoke from his coma, hungry and disoriented. When he tried to leave the lab, an overzealous security guard shot him, driving him into a berserker rage (see Setting the Stage, above).

Mockery attacked the guard and a doctor at the scene (Dr. Carmine), then began to run through the hospital, looking for a way to escape. Director Stallings, aware of what has come out of the Bioscience wing, has ordered the hospital security to stop the creature as quietly as possible.

There are several ways the characters can become involved in the adventure. One of the staff can report the gunshots to the police (the gunshots fired by the security guard in Setting the Stage); any heroes monitoring the police band can hear the police reporting to the scene. Another option is to have one of the characters be a patient at the hospital, allowing the PC to hear the gunshots themselves (the research facility deals with a number of paranormal cases, and characters that have been wounded or might want to have their powers tested, can be at the scene when Mockery begins its rampage).

For vigilante campaigns, player characters can eavesdrop on the police band and catch the report of gunshots being fired at the hospital; for added tension, a criminal suspect (wounded in a crime scene and being guarded by a police officer) may be at the hospital being treated before trial, and the characters may believe that a breakout is occurring to rescue the suspect. If this criminal is a paranormal, Mockery may be able to duplicate the villain's powers before the characters reach the scene.

The Plotline below assumes that the police have been called; in addition, one of the orderlies in the hospital pulled the fire alarm to get people out of the building. Director Stallings is already engaged in damage control outside the facility once the characters arrive.

## Plotline

This adventure, for maximum effect, should take place late at night. The hospital is located wherever the GM chooses in the Campaign City; the building is five stories tall. When PCs arrive at the hospital, they will see a number of orderlies moving patients outside. If any of the staff are asked what the problem is, they will say a fire (actually, just a fire alarm) has forced them to remove patients from the hospital. Any PCs examining the exterior of the building will see Director Stallings giving orders to the staff. When the Director catches sight of the PCs, he will move to intercept them, waving his hands frantically to get their attention.

Dr. Stallings: Normal Human Statistics (see Champions Rulebook, p.133), except for a 13 INT and 13 PRE. Stallings has the Perk: Licensed Doctor, and the following skills: Paramedic 11-, PS: Doctor 11-, PS: Hospital Administrator 11-, Bureaucratics 12-, Conversation 12- and Systems Operations 12 or less. Stallings is rather on the young side, with thick brown hair and a plump face. When he talks to the characters, perspiration will be visible on his forehead, and he will occasionally dab at it with a pocket handkerchief. Through the entire conversation, Stallings will maintain a pleasant smile that will crack as soon as Mockery reveals itself.

Stallings claims the heroes were summoned by a reactionary staff member. The "fire" is under control, the fire department has been called and notified of the error, and he will politely ask the characters to leave. If any characters ask about gunshots, Stallings will assure them they are mistaken; there were no gunshots fired in the hospital.

Any character in close proximity to Stallings, however, can easily tell he is nervous (Stallings hopes that the security guards he sent to stop Mockery fire no shots in the building while the PCs are within listening distance). If asked to account for why people are being moved out of the hospital, he will claim that the small fire, now under control, caused people to panic unnecessarily.

The patients tell a different story, however; the elderly patients, especially, are loudly protesting their removal from their rooms and say they heard gunshots fired in the building. Stallings, if within range, will become visibly upset and will continue to ask the characters to leave. If the PCs insist on staying and helping the hospital evacuate, Stallings will eventually give in with a worried look and urge the PCs to be "discreet," and to "do and say nothing" that will alarm the patients.

At some point while the PCs are at the scene, they will suddenly hear gunfire within the hospital, then silence. Characters without special senses (such as Hearing with the Targeting advantage) will have difficulty determining the direction of the gunfire; it is sporadic and coming from areas throughout the hospital. If the characters search the hospital (perhaps individually) they will encounter security guards that will order PCs to leave the building so they will not be hurt.

Security Guards: [10] Used Skilled Normal Statistics (Champions Rulebook, p.133), Familiarity with Small Arms and Billy Clubs; they are armed with .38 revolvers (1D6+1 RKA), clubs (+2D6 HTH Damage) and radios (Radio Listen and Transmit).

The guards appear confused and are rattled by the strange menace stalking the hospital; many of the guards are under-

trained rent-a-cops who were brought in mostly to ensure everyone was wearing proper ID badges; many of them are frightened by the fact that something seems to be attacking, perhaps killing, guards in the building. There are ten guards scattered throughout the hospital (or more if the GM wishes), and their gunfire may harm a patient.

The security team has already lost two men under mysterious circumstances; one of the missing guards claimed he was attacked by one of the "staff members." The guards suspect a disturbed patient is the one responsible for attacking them, perhaps an escapee from the psychiatric ward, and they may accidentally shoot a staff member or a patient thinking it is their target.

Responsible PCs should take control of the situation and search the hospital for the attacker. The guards can only give the PCs conflicting information about their "foe"; one guard claims one of the missing guards was attacked by a "staff member...a nurse, maybe," and another thinks he saw a black man running from the Bioscience Wing (Mockery, after mimicking Dr. Carmine in Setting the Stage, above). If the characters ask, the guards can give them directions to any section of the hospital.

If characters investigate the Bioscience Wing (this section is on the first floor), they will find the steel door to one of the labs torn apart from the inside. A guard, his hand torn off, lies in the room, along with Dr. Carmine, an elderly black physician injured by Mockery. Neither is conscious, and the guard is in need of immediate medical attention.

The steel vault door to the lab beyond the observation room has been ripped open, and its dented surface fell outward into the booth. Characters examining the door will also see slash marks that have dug deeply into the steel.

Biohazard symbols are displayed prominently over all sections connected to the lab. Characters examining the Lab will see an empty bed lying in the laboratory and a glance around the lab will show that precautions have been taken to keep the area sterile and well-monitored. In an adjoining lab is a large apparatus with a transparent tank; the tank is big enough to hold a human body (the Regeneration Tank). It does not appear to have been used recently; the apparatus dominates over half of the adjoining lab space.

## Mockery Attacks

Mockery is loose somewhere in the hospital; if threatened by characters, it will attack. The hospital battle should be gauged by the GM; Mockery's location should be decided before characters enter the hospital, as well as rooms still holding patients. Characters should be held accountable if radius effect attacks or explosions damage the hospital, patients or sensitive equipment (Laurel Hills will sue PCs for any damages they cause in the hospital if the PCs refuse to compensate the hospital for any damage they cause).

Mockery can be mimicking a nurse, doctor, or patient in the hospital; if a hero comes to help the "patient," Mockery will attack ("Come along, miss, I'll get you out of here...My, what big teeth you have...Oh, my God!..."). Characters will have to split up to find Mockery; if they travel in a group, Mockery will outmaneuver them and escape (see below); PCs should be told that they cannot cover all the exits to the hospital if they stay together (there are thirteen emergency exits on the first level). If the player characters insist on staying together, have several gunshots start to go off from all over the hospital; the characters will have to split up to investigate all the areas where the shots were fired.

Once the characters encounter Mockery, the creature will attack them until it has defeated its opponents or it has been reduced to half stun; if it is reduced to half, it will flee. If it is chased and cornered, Mockery will go berserk. If the characters are unable to pursue the creature, it will flee to another section of the hospital.

Mockery will not be able to escape the building unless it has defeated all the characters; if this occurs, then it will run from the building and take refuge in the sewers beneath the Campaign City. The adventure can continue as the characters attempt to track Mockery through the city sewer systems and prevent the creature from feeding on humans living in the city.

## The End of Reflections

News crews will be waiting for the PCs as they emerge from the hospital, and Stallings will move to intercept the PCs as they exit, asking (begging) them to remain silent about the creature until "fully informed about the particulars." Stallings will keep the PCs away from the reporters and any police on the scene until he can talk to them.

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Stallings, if allowed to speak privately to the PCs, will claim the unfortunate creature they encountered was Antonio Diaz, a poor, easily frightened patient who suffered a terrible accident several months ago. His family wanted his condition to remain secret (in truth, they are not aware of it; any characters who examine Diaz's medical records will discover he has no immediate family), and Stallings urges the PCs not to mention Diaz when talking to the police and the news crews. Stallings adds that Diaz is essentially harmless, and the staff are trying to help him.

If asked to account for Diaz' attack on three guards and Dr. Carmine, Stallings will state Diaz was undoubtedly frightened and confused. He may offer "hush money" if the PCs appear unconvinced by his story. At no point will Stallings bring up the Regeneration Tank, or any relation between Diaz and the device. If the PCs do relate the story to the press, Stallings will downplay the incident, presenting "his side" of the story to the media.

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If the PCs expose Stallings or report Mockery's presence to the press, they will have earned Stalling's enmity...he may decide to press charges on the characters, or blame them for any damage that Mockery did during the attack. If the players are vigilantes, Stallings will blame them for the entire incident and try to keep Mockery's presence a secret. If the PCs decide to keep silent about it, it may become suitable material to blackmail the heroes with later on should anyone investigate the characters' past.

## Using Mockery in a Campaign

For GMs that wish to use Reflections as a campaign, the following stages are suggested: first, depending on the resolution of the conflict in the hospital, Diaz has either escaped or is imprisoned in the facility. If he has escaped, the next stage of the adventure will be to hunt Diaz down (he will take up residence in the Campaign City sewer system, feeding on lone victims and city residents who wander the city streets), playing a deadly game of hide-and-seek beneath the city. Alternatively, Diaz can slowly start to regain his intelligence, and attempt to track Stallings down, blaming the physician for his condition. If Diaz gains the ability to control his power pool, he will become extremely dangerous. He may use his shapeshifting powers to get close to Stallings, perhaps at a charity function, and take revenge.

Mockery is primarily intended as a campaign supplement, a powerful villain that can match several heroes at once and is an easy pawn for worldbeaters and megalomaniacs.

Mockery is also a good villain to use against characters who have Mystery Powers; the GM can use Mockery to give clues to the secrets of their powers ("Hey! He's using my energy beam as a shield to protect himself! I can't do that..."). Mockery is also designed to make characters "taste their own medicine." If all the player characters possess lethal powers, they will have a deadlier fight on their hands than more moderately powered characters.

## Other Genres

For GMs that want to use Reflections and Mockery in the world of GURPS Supers, Mockery should be given several levels of Mimic Super Ability, Morph and Regeneration (Instant). In addition, the Research Facility may be attacked by TRADE agents (see GURPS Super Scum) as Diaz attempts to escape, giving a large group of heroes more trouble as they are trying to stop Diaz (A TRADE informer, working as an orderly in the hospital, called his TRADE contact when Diaz was reported to be escaping from the Bioscience wing; the TRADE agents are looking to steal the Regeneration Tank or to capture Mockery).

Reflections is not limited to superhero campaigns; it can be used with Horror, Space and other genres. In Horror campaigns, the adventure can be structured after John Carpenter's The Thing, with the action taking place in an isolated research facility located in Antarctica where the researchers are cut off from the outside world. For Space campaigns, the medical facility can also be moved to the moon, onto an orbiting satellite, or placed on a planet outside the solar system.

## Scenario Resolution

If Mockery is defeated, Stallings will thank the PCs and state the hospital can sedate Diaz and keep him under lock and key, safe from the public. PCs, after witnessing Diaz's powers, may be curious what will happen to Mockery in the hospital; a paranormal that powerful should be carefully watched to see it is not abused or allowed to roam free. If a government agency hears about the creature, it will recommend Mockery be moved to a government installation for study.

The Regeneration Tank works, but the regenerative agent, in its undiluted state, can be harmful to living tissue. For the Tank to be safe, safety precautions must be added to the design to prevent a repeat of Diaz' tragedy. If this is done, it could become a powerful force of healing in the world . . . for those who can afford it.

Medtech™'s Regen Tank: 1 BODY Regeneration, Extra Time: 24 Hours (-3 1/2), must remain in tank the entire time (-1/2), OIF (Regen Tank, -1/2), Bulky (-1/2), Activation 14- (-1/2). Active Points: 10, Real Cost: 2 points.

## Wrapping it up

If the PCs lose the battle in the hospital or fail to respond, this article will appear in the local newspaper the next day. Days later, it will be followed by reports of half-eaten bodies discovered throughout the city as Mockery eats to sustain itself.

*Five murders took place at the Laurel Hills Medical Research Facility yesterday; the victims were three doctors and two security guards stationed at the hospital. All the bodies were missing limbs in addition to severe wounds on the upper chest and abdominal regions.*

*Director Edward Stallings was at a loss to explain the murders. When questioned about the missing patient stored in the Bioscience wing, Stallings replied, "I have no idea what has happened to Mr. Diaz. He seemed to have been improving from his accident a month ago and on the road to a full recovery. I can only say the killer must have taken the body with him." The rest of the staff were not permitted to speak to reporters.*

*Not all the bodies have been identified, but a nurse believes one of them is Dr. Lee Carmine. This has raised some argument, for three people stationed at the front desk report Dr. Carmine left at 7:30 PM the day of the murders. According to Dr. Carmine's family, he never returned home, and his car is still in the hospital parking lot. Dr. Carmine is wanted for questioning.*

## MOCKERY

Antonio "Tony" Diaz
Classification: Mutate, Threat

| Val | Char | Cost | Combat Stats |
|---|---|---|---|
| 30 | STR | 20 | OCV: 7 |
| 21 | DEX | 33 | DCV: 7 |
| 30 | CON | 40 | ECV: 2 |
| 10 | BODY | 0 | Phases: 3, 5, |
| 6 | INT | -4 | 8, 10, 12 |
| 6 | EGO | -8 | Costs |
| 10 | PRE | 0 | |
| 2 | COM | -4 | Char:132 |
| 6 | PD | 0 | + |
| 6 | ED | 0 | Powers: 868 |
| 5 | SPD | 19 | = |
| 20 | REC | 16 | Base:100 |
| 60 | END | 0 | + |
| 60 | STUN | 20 | Disads:900 |
| | | | Total =1000 |

| Cost | Powers |
|---|---|
| 741 | Variable Power Pool (Active Points: 600), Must be able to Sense Character (i.e., be within Sense range), No Skill Roll required for change (+1), Must Mimic |

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Target's Powers in order of Active Points (-1/2), Does not know how to use the target's powers and may not know he has them — see Powers/Tactics (-1/4), Cannot mimic magical or technological powers and cannot mimic skills (-2), Mockery picks up any Disadvantages that are tied to the powers or molecular structure of a target (Vulnerabilities, Distinctive Features, Physical Limitations, Susceptibilities, etc.) (-1/2)

36 2D6 HKA (Claws or Fangs), 0 END (+1/2), No KB (-1/4)

20 3 BODY Regeneration/Turn, Costs END (-1/2) 3 END

30 Damage Reduction 50%, Physical and Energy, Costs END (-1/2), Resistant 3 END

15 Full Life Support, 1 Full Phase delay (-1/2), costs END (-1/2) 3 END

7 Shape Shift (Humanoids), No Conscious Control (-2) 3 END

15 Sense Biological Signatures at Range, Discriminatory

**Skills**

4 +2 Combat Levels with HKA

100+ Disadvantages

20 Berserk if Cornered or Entangled, 11-, 8-

20 Psychological Limitation: Animalistic (Common, Total)

20 Distinctive Features: Hideous Creature covered with writhing folds of flesh and scar tissue (Concealable, Extreme Reaction)

15 Hunted by Medtech™ Research Facility (As Pow) 11-

10 Public ID: Dr. Antonio Diaz

890 Rampaging Superpowered Predator Bonus

**Background:** Antonio Diaz was an aspiring researcher at the Laurel Hills Medical Research Facility. One Friday night after work, Antonio was drinking with friends at a local bar when he observed two patrons, a man and a woman, arguing loudly. The man's temper flared, and he struck the woman; when Diaz intervened, the man attacked Diaz and the two of them fought until the bartender broke up the fight and threw the man out. Although Antonio suffered a few bruises, he was not seriously hurt; after making sure the woman was all right, he rejoined his friends.

When Antonio left the bar hours later, the man was watching him from his car and followed him home. After Diaz had parked his car and was crossing the street to his apartment, the man ran him down and drove off. Diaz's body was found minutes later by a passing motorist, and an ambulance was called to take him to the nearest hospital, the Laurel Hills Medical Research Facility where Diaz worked. He was rushed to an operating room and through the doctor's efforts, he survived, although his spine was damaged and he could not move his legs. Maimed, out of work and his financial situation shaky, Antonio became worried about his future.

Dr. Stallings, the Director of Laurel Hills, approached Antonio with a solution, a way of ending their "mutual problem"; he offered to pay Diaz's medical expenses if he volunteered for Medtech's experimental Regeneration Tank. Stallings promised the tank would heal Diaz and enable him to walk again. Antonio, although hesitant at first, agreed.

Whether the Tank would have healed Antonio is unknown. A chemical leak in the tank burned off 90% of Diaz' skin and Diaz slipped into a coma; he has remained in the Bioscience wing for several months with no change in his condition. An hour before the start of Reflections, Diaz regained consciousness and attempted to escape from the lab.

**Personality:** Mockery has no recollection of its past due to extensive brain damage. It is confused and disoriented; if attacked, it will fight back with animal ferocity. If Mockery mimics an organism possessing paranormal intelligence, Mockery may gain an awareness of who and what it is. If this occurs, it may try to reason with its foes ("H..h...hey, waitaminute! I'm Antonio Diaz — no, wait, don't hit me!...").

Although its metabolism is several times more efficient than a normal human being, Mockery's shapeshifting burns a great deal of energy, and Mockery needs to consume large amounts organic matter to sustain itself (trees, domestic pets, humans, etc.). Mockery prefers hunting for food rather than feeding on ambient plant life.

**Quote:** "E-mer-gen-cy."

**Powers/Tactics:** Mockery has the power to "sense" and mimic the biology of organisms. By subconsciously analyzing the cell structure of organisms close to it, Mockery can mass-produce the organism's tissue until it resembles the lifeform it is mimicking, including any paranormal power the target possesses (as long as it is biological in nature). Mockery can duplicate only carbon-based cells, however; alien characters or those with a radically different biology cannot be "mocked," and Mockery cannot duplicate gadgets, magical powers,


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skills, memories, or any talents characters possess that are not tied to their biology. If the PCs are a group of martial artists, armored heroes, or sorcerers, Mockery could be given photographic reflexes or have its powers modified by a magical entity, giving Mockery the ability to duplicate magical spells and protections.

Mockery cannot control its shapeshifting, nor the powers it gains. If Mockery duplicated a character's energy blast, for example, the creature would not have the intelligence to realize it had the energy blast nor the skill to use it properly. This should be role-played in combat ("Its eyes are glowing; it appears disoriented. Suddenly, a stream of energy bursts from the creature's eyes and cuts a swath through the pavement near its feet...the creature shuffles back from the burning pavement, the glow fading from its eyes. It looks as if it accidentally used your energy beams."). Mockery usually attacks with its claws.

Mockery can become powerful very quickly. It is not limited by the highest characteristics of its foes; if Mockery mimics say, Ogre (superhuman musculature) and Giganto (whose rock body provides strength), its strength will surpass both characters. Its new strength can be determined by adding the lifting STR (kg) of each character. For example, Ogre can lift 100 tons (60 STR) and Giganto can lift 1600 tons (80 STR); Mockery can now lift 1700 tons, giving him a STR of 81, and he also gains Giganto's vulnerability to sonics and Distinctive Features. For DEX, CON, BODY, STUN, and so on, GMs should use their best estimate.

It helps to "plot" the characteristics and powers of all the heroes Mockery will be fighting beforehand to speed up game play; if Mockery's Power Pool cannot duplicate all the characters present, it will retain the powers of heroes closest to it.

**Author's Note:** Mockery has 600 Active Points in his Power Pool; it is recommended Mockery be given +100 Active Points for every PC over four it is fighting; GMs should always use their best judgment when setting the limits on Mockery's power pool and should tailor Mockery to be a challenge for their PCs.

**Appearance:** Before the accident, Antonio Diaz was an overweight Hispanic man in his late twenties, with black hair and a ready smile. He was polite and courteous to staff and patients, but easily angered if insulted in front of others. He was well-liked at the facility and had many friends.

Mockery stands 5'8" with a hunched back and a thin, emaciated body. Its eye sockets are dark and hollow (Diaz's eyes were burned out by the chemical leak) and its skin writhes, a residual effect of the regenerative agent. When imitating a character, Mockery resembles the target except for fangs, claws and a blank gaze; a character may see their girlfriend, mother, or teammate coming at them naked, fangs and claws extended. Mockery will always lack the genitalia and reproductive organs of the target.

Mockery echoes words in a halting, rasping hiss. ❑

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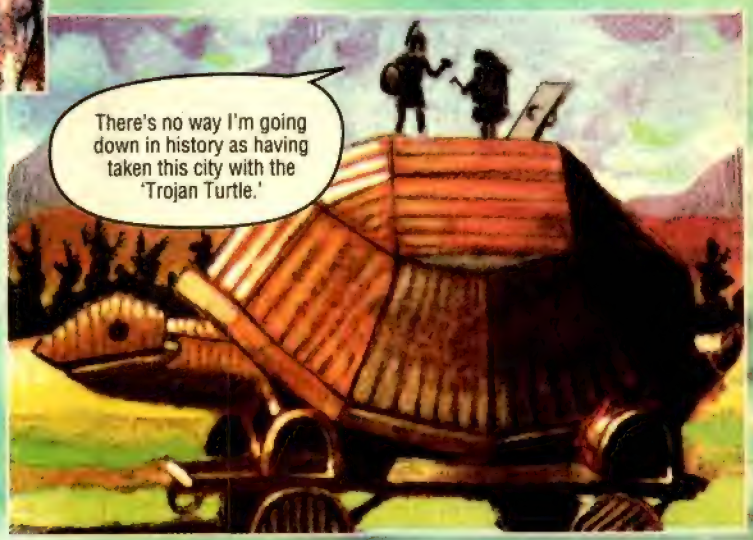


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GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

# Close Encounters of the Random Kind™

By Frank Merenda ©1995

*Each issue Close Encounters of the Random Kind (CERK) features random encounter/event tables which the Game Master can simply drop into his current campaign. I will try to cover various genres of gaming and keep the information generic enough to be used with any system. Readers are encouraged to contribute to this column or suggest ideas and topics for future tables.*

*JRB*

## Magical Side Effects Table
by Frank Merenda

*As we approached the alley, I could hear Romey in there reciting his favorite spell, "Street Scum to Rodents," in an ominous voice. I slowed to a walk. Romey would have the situation well in hand by the time we got to him. The others slowed too and we sheathed our swords.*

*When I turned the corner into the alley, Romey screamed. A dark mass, like a thundercloud, engulfed him and swirled about his body. We watched in horror as red and blue bolts of lightning shot from the sky into Romey's twisted form.*

*Not even Romey could survive such a thing. It seemed like an eternity but the show ended in a few moments. The dark mass funneled into the sky and suddenly the alley was near dark again. Romey stood with his back to us, facing his attackers. Shock spread across their faces and they ran away. He turned toward us, chuckling.*

*Romey's body was unchanged as far as I could tell – still in his fine tunic and cloak, but his head had transformed into that of a hideous beast, grinning wildly. I didn't know whether to laugh or scream in terror. I think what came out was a little of both.*

*"What...." he stammered. "What's wrong with you guys?"*

The following table can be used in a variety of ways: as a source of side effects due to prolonged use of magic; minor curses caused by spells or cursed magic items; side effects caused by critical spell failures, or for any other use the gamemaster wishes.

Transformations can take place instantly or can happen over a period of time. Some effects require the problem to be roleplayed, so you may want to make sure that the character is willing and able to do so. Feel free to roll percentile dice for a random effect or choose one that best suits your situation and campaign. Lastly, these are only suggestions. Use them as a starting point to embellish upon.

**Table I**

01 . . . . . .Grow ram horns.
02 . . . . . .Hair becomes white.
03 . . .Hair becomes a random color (see table II).
04 . . . . . .Go bald.
05 .Hair and beard grow at an extraordinary rate.
06 . . . . . .Lose all body hair.
07 . . . . . .Whole body grows fur.
08 .If female, grow a beard; if male, grow breasts.
09 . . . . . .Skin becomes pale white.
10 . . . . . .Skin changes color. (see table II).
11 . . . . . .Skin becomes ebony black.
12 . . . . . .Skin becomes scaly.
13 . . . . . .Eyes turn deep red.
14 . . . . . .Eyes turn a random color.
15 . . . . . .Irises change shape.
16 . . .Eyesight deteriorates until blindness occurs.
17 . . . . . .Body's appearance ages 50 years.
18 . . . . . .Body becomes wizened.
19 . . . . . .Becomes thin and sickly.
(actually lose 50-100 lbs as well as health, .stamina, or hit points)
20 . . . . . .Weight gain – 100-200 lbs.
21 . . . . . .Fingernails turn black and look rotten.
22 . . . . .Fingernails grow at an extraordinary rate.
23 . . . . . .Get permanent body odor.
24 . . . . . .Get a chronic head cold.
25 . . . . . .Gender changes.
26 . . . . . .Narcolepsy – falls asleep easily.
27 .Become nocturnal – must sleep during the day
28 . . . . . .Chronic insomnia.
29 . . .Need about twelve hours sleep every night.
30 . . . . . .Plagued with terrible nightmares.
31 . . . . . .Tongue becomes thin and forked.
32 . . . . . .Nose becomes deformed.
33 . . . . . .Ears grow large and floppy.
34 . .Grow ears of a random animal (see table III).
35 . . . . . .Grow extra digits on hands and feet.
36 . . . . . .Head grows too large for body.
37 . . . . . .Limbs shrivel and becomes useless.
38 . . . . . .Body glows just beneath the skin.
39 .Voice changes – doesn't resemble character's.
40 . . . . . .Lose your voice.
41 . . .Hearing deteriorates until deafness occurs.
42 . . . . . .Lose sense of smell.
43 . . . . . .Lose sense of taste.
44 . . . . . .Lose all your teeth.
45 . . . . . .Must eat 3x normal to sustain weight.
46 . . . . . .Lose your appetite.
47 . . . . . .Acquire a taste for a random food.
(refuses to eat anything else)
48 . . .Craves sweets. Refuses to eat anything else.
49 . . . . . .Get arthritis.
50 . .Constantly smells a bad odor. (no one else does).
51 . . . . . .Hear constant buzzing in your ears.
52 . . . . . .Chronic and severe flatulence.
53 .Belch constantly for an hour after every meal.
54 . . . . . .A tune is forever in your head.
55 . . . . .Develop an addiction to alcohol or drugs
56 . . . . . .Memory is severely damaged
57 . . . . . .Develop a fear of open spaces
58 . . . . . .Develop claustrophobia
59 . . . . . .Slowly transforms into random animal.
(see animal table)

60 .....Take on the looks of a random animal.
61 .....Face becomes hideously ugly.
62 .....Cats or dogs follow you around.
63 ....Dogs bark and howl when you are near.
64 .....Vultures circle above you.
65 .Become a magnet for supernatural creatures.
66 .....A cloud of flies often circles your head
67 .....All domestic animals are afraid of you
68 .....Always feel too hot or too cold
69 .Temp within a 20' radius is 30 degrees hotter.
70 .Temp within a 20' radius is 40 degrees colder.
71 .....Body becomes supercharged.
(causing damage to anyone touching you)
72 .....Touch is icy to others
73 .....Touch is very hot to others
74 .....Body becomes non-material.
(can still talk and cast spells but can't touch or carry anything.)
75 ....Contract a disease – leprosy, cancer, etc.
76 ...The spell involved becomes a sentient spirit.
(following character around either harassing or befriending him)
77 .....Forget a spell, picked at random.
78 ...Objects catch fire any time you cast a spell.
79 ...The closest plant dies when you casts a spell
80 ..... 50% of all spells cast will fail.
81 .....Itch for 2d6 minutes after spells.
(at a minus to cast other spells during this time)
82 .....Casting spells is painful.
(you lose one hitpoint for every spell cast)
83 .....Give off a magical signal.
(alerting all other mages within one mile)
84 .....A magical creature is summoned.
(stalks you until one or the other is dead or banished)
85 .....Can only cast spells at night.
86 .....Can only cast spells during the day.
87 .. The new moon diminishes your power and the full moon makes your power dangerously high.
88 .....Become more vulnerable to magic spells.
89 ...Casting spells causes damage to the nearest person or animal.
90 .....Casting a spell causes loss of voice for 2d6 hours.
91 ....Spells have the opposite effect intended.
92 .....Lose an ability or skill.
93 .....Companions afraid of you.
94 .....No longer give off a shadow.
95 .....Touch turns gold and silver into lead.
96 .....Shrink 1–5 feet.
97 .....Grow 2–6 feet.
98 ....You and a friend become mortal enemies.
99 ..Paranoid – everyone wants your possessions.
00 .....Possessive of something and want it all.
(gold, magic items, power, ale, salt shakers, etc.)

## Table II: Color Chart

1 .....Red
2 .....Blue
3 .....Green
4 .....Yellow
5 .....Orange
6 .....Purple
7 .....Gold
8 .....Silver
9 .....White/Grey
10 .....Other (pink, turquoise, etc.)

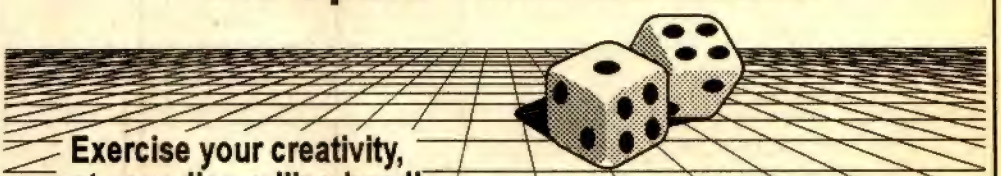
## Table III: Random Beast

1 .....Snake/Lizard
2 .....Monkey/Ape
3 .....Dog/Wolf
4 .....Cat/Lion
5 .....Insect
6 .....Bear
7 .....Horse
8 .....Bird
9 .....Rodent
10 .....Other (elephant, sloth, hippo, fish)

❑

# TABLEMASTER

## the Spare Time Generator



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GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

# TERON

## Den of Thieves

By Jolly R. Blackburn © 1995, Illustrated by Lorelle Ahlstrom © 1995

"Quiet students! You there, Edra is it? Yes, you, sit down and resheath that knife immediately. Master Thurlain's course on knife fighting has concluded."

Master Dulain, standing behind an intricately hand-carved wooden podium, stared the mischievous student into submission. Satisfied he had restored order, he continued.

"I trust that you are ready for another history lesson on Alderac. Undoubtedly you've already noticed the map under your writing tables. If you will please pull them out we will continue our...

"Pendra! Stop that at once. If I catch you casting one more spitball cantrip, it's off to the Headmaster with you."

Master Dulain ran a trembling hand through the few thin grey strands of hair he had left on his head. He felt a vein throbbing on his forehead as his temper began to rise. He took a deep breath, painfully aware of the distinguished visitor who sat patiently to his left.

"Now, without further ado, I'd like to introduce Master Greytar to you. Master Greytar used to be Headmaster of this school before he retired. Undoubtedly, your parents, and perhaps even your grandparents received their tutelage under the kind teacher.

"You will give Master Greytar your undivided attention — are you listening to me, Edra? And you will offer him the same respect you do toward your regular teachers."

He stepped aside and gestured for the elderly Greytar to take the podium. The kindly old man smiled and slowly rose to his feet.

He had a small stack of notes and maps crooked under his arm, but they were more for show than for reference. Today, Greytar would be talking from experience — first-hand experience.

As he took his place behind the podium, his ancient fingers flipped through the pile of notes as he paused to gather his thoughts.

"Morning students! It does my heart good to stand before a group of students again. I thank you for this opportunity.

"Master Dulain has asked me to supplement your studies on Imperial Cities and towns. I have chosen the small town of Teron as my subject. 'Why Teron?' you ask.

"In his memoirs, *A Soldier's Journey*, the legendary general, Terac, had this to say about Teron: 'They say that the Soult River Basin is good for breeding cattle; that the Grevan Steppes are prime for breeding horses. But Teron is only good for breeding thieves.'

"I couldn't have said it better myself. There is just something about Teron that is 'no-good'. There's an old joke in the rank and file of the Legions that has been passed around for years. When somebody misplaces something and says, "I can't seem to find my other shoe," invariably someone else will quip, "It must be in Teron by now." Ofttimes myself, I've wondered how many gold buttons and silver buckles have ended up in the thieves market in Teron over the years."

## History of Teron

Teron lies on the southwestern edge of the Sadok forest where the Grand Tirn River meets the Baltirn River. Two well-established trade routes merge at this point, making Teron an ideal place for merchants and weary travelers to lay over and exchange wares.

As I've already indicated, Teron is notorious for the number of thieves and brigands that use the small trading center as a base to work from. If you will look at the map I have provided, you will see that the Sadok Forest completely surrounds the small town. The forest's labyrinth of gullies and dark foliage provide quick escape and refuge.

The site Teron occupies has been settled for nearly 500 years. The original settlement to occupy the site, Sadotia, was burned and destroyed in the year 5 TR by order of the Emperor to curb the spread of the withering disease which had been sweeping up the Baltirn river.

In 32 TR the Emperor, Targeem III, began to establish a courier/patrol network throughout the Empire proper. Millions of gold pieces were drained from the Imperial treasury to finance the program, which included the upgrading of roads and construction of new bridges.

In 42 TR, under this same program a detachment of military engineers arrived at the ruins of Sadotia to build a bridge across the Baltirn. The commander of the detachment was an undistinguished officer named Etian Teron. The bridge constructed under his supervision soon became known as the Teron Bridge.

A toll station was constructed on the west end of the bridge and two toll-takers took up permanent residence to collect the 2 kiver fee for crossing the bridge. It wasn't long before an enterprising merchant from Torchgal constructed an inn on the east side of the bridge among the picturesque ruins of the old town. Others followed and the new town that began to take life came to be known as Teron.

In 52 TR the two-man toll station was upgraded into an Imperial Patrol Station. This was the provincial governor's answer to the increased activity of thieves in the area Over the years the Station has been gradually expanded to its present day strength.

In 64 TR an rich source of copper ore was discovered near Teron by a mason quarrying stone. The Empire claimed exclusive mining rights to the area and made immediate plans to begin mining operations.

Convicted criminals were transported to the site by river from the Provincial Capital city of Abos to work the mines. The Imperial Patrol Station was given a dual role. In addition to normal duties of patrolling the highways of the region, the station also was responsible for running the mines and seeing that ore shipments safely reached Abos.

## Sadok Thieves

Over the years as mining activity has increased, more and more slaves and prisoners have been brought in to supply labor. Thousands of slaves have escaped to freedom over the years into the web of the Sadok Forest. These runaway slaves have formed numerous bands of thieves and cutthroats which plague travellers throughout the region.

'Sadok Thieves' are known the Empire over. Many people mistakenly believe that the Sadoks are a single, unified band of thieves operating under the direction of a single Master. The truth, however, is that hundreds of bands are operating in the forests. One or two of the bands control vast areas and are notorious for their crimes. The Black Thorns are one such band. The Black Thorns became so powerful that they managed to seize control of Teron's political structure and guilds.

The present Vard'Gra (Mayor) of Teron is Relnus Atchinkar. Relnus seized control of Teron in 105 TR after a bloody coup. Supporting his take-over was the Thieves Guild. The citizens held their breaths as rumors spread that the Imperial Patrol Station had orders to secure Abos and to restore order.

After an investigation by the commanding officer, the Emperor was advised that the new Vard'Gra had in fact, stabilized the town's political control over the region and recommended that he be left in power. The Emperor complied and since that time Relnus has been elevated to a local hero for apparently standing up to the Emperor and living to talk about it. There have been rumors that Relnus 'bought' the Imperial Commander's allegiance.

For a small town, Teron has a very complex make-up. Various factions and clans have risen which have kept Teron embroiled in feuding and inter-fighting over the years.

## Explanation of Map Directory:

**Note:** A very common structure in most Imperial cities is the Grottle. Grottles are large buildings which sometimes take up several city blocks. They are at least two stories in height and sometimes up to four stories.

The first floor of Grottles are filled with shops and businesses. The upper floors are the residences of the shopkeepers and their families. Many Grottles are occupied entirely by one family or clan. The shops found in each Grottle tend to be of one type or interrelated. For example one Grottle may have only metal-working industries and shops in it. Another may have only bakeries, butchers etc.

In larger cities there are huge grottles which in addition to housing shops of one type, also hold the Guild Hall for that particular craft or trade.

## 1. Twist of Fate Inn:

**Proprietor:** Janx Varstin

The Twist of Fate Inn is the most prominent building in the main part of town. In addition to serving drinks and the best sour-meat stew in the region (a thick soup made from river-eel and wild onions), the Inn also is a front for the local Thieves Guild. Here stolen goods can be bought and sold in the backroom.

Janx himself is not an active thief and devotes himself to the business of running the Inn. He does not approve of the nefarious activity that takes place in his establishment. He allows it out of fear and pressure from the Guild.

Janx is a retired soldier. He claims that as a young soldier, he was wounded by thieves on the road to Teron and spent three weeks recuperating in the Inn. Years later when he retired he passed through Teron and stayed at the Inn. He was informed that the Inn was for sale and traded his pension papers to buy it. He renamed the Inn "Twist of Fate" and has been running it ever since.

Janx has a fondness for anyone who has served in the Legions. He will generally buy a round of drinks for anyone claiming to be a veteran and then talk of his experiences.

## 2. Grottle — Farmers:

This Grottle is occupied by farmers and their families. Besides tending to the communal crops (16) there are vineyards along the banks of the river.

## 3. Broken Forge Smithy:

**Proprietor:** Ralg "Moss" Klestron

The Broken Forge draws much of its business from the local mining industry.

Ralg makes and repairs pick-axes, shovels, chisels etc. Occasionally he produces weapons on commission. Ralg has two apprentices working under him.

Ralg is also the Master of the Guard for Teron's civilian Nightwatch. As such, Ralg is often suspicious and cold to strangers.

## 4. Grottle — Bakers/Butchers:

This Grottle specializes in baked goods as well as various meats. Many shops carry expensive cuts (of exotic animals) and will prepare gourmet dishes and stews for an extra fee.

## 5. Warehouse:

This large warehouse was once used to store wine while it aged. Several years ago a mysterious stranger to town bought the warehouse and had it emptied of its contents. One day a caravan arrived at Teron and twenty wagon-loads of goods were placed in the warehouse. The building was then boarded up and the stranger has not been heard from since.

## 6. Vard'Gra's (Mayor) Manor:

Relnus Atchinkar, **Vard'Gra**

This impressive limestone building is the residence of the town's Vard'Gra. The building is fairly new and was built by

### Brantar Etribar

The famous Battle Officer Brantar was born and raised in the town of Teron. Brantar's father commanded the Imperial Patrol Post at Teron for several years before being recalled to the capitol city of Soult Tet.

In later years when Brantar was branded a traitor and a price was fixed on his head, the young officer returned to Teron where he was granted asylum among the Sadok Thieves. During his stay with the Sadoks, Brantar was able to make use of a vast underground communications/trade networked that rivaled that of the Empire itself.

More information on Brantar and his comrades can be found in the Bones of Ruin saga (issues 1 through 8).

the current Vard'Gra. (The old Vard'Gra's Manor was burnt to the ground during Relnus' seizure of power.)

The Vard'Gra spends most of his time confined to the Manor and apparently he's not alone. From time to time a woman with extraordinarily red hair is seen looking out over an upper balcony.

### 7. Town Hall — Guild Masters:

This large stone building serves as the seat of the town's political structure. Here the business and affairs of Teron are conducted on a day-to-day basis. The Forum also serves as a courtroom where the Rader'Keem sits in judgment over the accused.

It is against the town's ordinances to carry weapons into the Forum. (Passed after an attempt on the Vard'Gra's life as he sat in session.)

### 8. Tomb of Sadotia:

This is the oldest structure in Teron and actually dates back to the original settlement of Sadotia. Sadotia is a very vague figure from history whose deeds have been lost with the passage of time. It is doubtful that anything of value lies within the tomb since the southern wall has obviously been breached years ago.

### 9. Rader'Keem's Estate:

Vintus Prator, **Rader'Keem**

This is the personal residence of the Rader'Keem who is the appointed Imperial Judge of the Region. Vintus is a stern character and resists corruption. Vintus holds to the teachings of the Kabatroth which basically state that it is better for the innocent to be punished then for the guilty to go free. When it was pointed out that a man he had sentenced was actually 'innocent', Vintus commented, "It matters very little. He was guilty of something. I'm sure of that."

### 10. Stable:

This large stable was partially destroyed by fire recently and is undergoing repairs. (The building caught fire when the Temple of Benyar burned down.) The building belongs to the Bright Copper (Blacksmith). Usually 1d30 horses are kept here. There are also four rooms for rent in the upper lofts. (25% chance there will be a vacancy.)

### 11. Vestimar Forum (Marketplatz):

This is not a building but a large area paved with stone. Here vendors set up their tents and sell a wide variety of goods. Merchants must pay a 10 SR fee per week to set up a booth. On important occasions civic functions and festivals are held at the forum. The Forum closes at sundown. In the center of the forum is a pillory where criminals are chained and exposed to public ridicule.

### 12. Temple of Benyar (Ruins):

This was the temple of Benyar. Now only charred timbers jut out of the fragmented stone walls. The blackened walls are covered with flowers and religious symbols left by distraught followers. It is rumored that a new Benyaran Priest has been dispatched from Abos and will be reporting shortly. (The temples were destroyed recently by an army of thieves who were followers of Aknar. Details are available in "The Dead Guild," SHADIS #7.)

### 13. Temple of Shona:

This temple is also in ruins but there are already signs of reconstruction underway. Since the Vard'Gra of Teron is a devoted follower of Shona, the temple has received special attention (and diverted funds from the town treasury).

### 14. Grottle (Metalworkers)

This grottle is devoted to the metalcrafts. Since copper and tin are readily available from the mines there are an abundance of items made from these materials.

### 15. Grottle (Lower-Class)

This large cluster of buildings has been relegated to the lower classes. The building is in appalling condition. Among those who choose to live here are freedmen, fugitives and those lacking the skills to find good work. This Grottle attracts illegal trade and activity.

### 16. Communal Crops

Here various crops are grown as a joint effort by the citizens of Teron. This is a common system throughout the Empire. Citizens invest money at the beginning of each growing season and receive shares of the harvest based on the amount of money invested. The small building is the residence of the Crop Master and his workers.

### 17. The Brass Tankard:

**Proprietor:** Jarl Pakor

This inn and tavern boasts a fighting arena. On most nights patrons can watch men and beasts engage in bloody brawls (commonly billed as "Free-For-All Brawls"). Tournaments are run in which winners move on to other cities and towns in the province to compete for large purses. Blunt weapons are the norm and Jarl attempts to halt the fights just short of one combatant suffering a fatal injury, but death in the pit is not uncommon. The Imperial Patrol commander proclaimed this Tavern off limits to his soldiers recently, cutting the Tankard's business nearly in half. Jarl is a middle-aged man with a terrible temper that is famous in Teron. It is said he once pulled an Imperial Officer off his horse and bashed his face in for splattering mud on him. (He served four months in Stone Keep for that offense.)

### 18. Imperial Patrol Barracks:

This building serves as the barracks for soldiers assigned to the Imperial Patrol Post. There are also kitchen and dining facilities located in the building.

### 19. Imperial Patrol Post

**Officer In Charge:** Tintial Clast, Captain

This building serves as Headquarters for the local Imperial Patrol. From here daily patrols and escorts are dispatched to Herstival, Torchgal and Saraka.

Up to one hundred horses are kept in the fenced area behind the building. The building is partitioned into a stable, a smithy and the officers' quarters and offices. In addition there is an armory and a small vault which holds the detachment's payroll and treasury.

Besides patrolling the roads and trade routes, the Post also is responsible for collecting the tolls for Teron Bridge and guarding the bridge in times of crisis.

Tintial Clast, the officer in charge of the post, is an old soldier with a long battle record under his belt. It is rumored that he had an affair with an Imperial Senator's wife. When the affair was brought to light, Clast was demoted and

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assigned to Teron. Clast keeps to himself most of the time and seldom frequents the taverns or inns.

### 20. Stone Keep:

This large stone structure stands empty and in near ruins. It was originally a small fortified keep constructed during the Ragean Civil War. It has several prison cells in its lower chambers which are occasionally put to use by the Imperial Patrol. For the most part, however, the building is uninhabited.

### 21. Bright Copper (Blacksmith):

This smithy is operated by Hangus Tal'kar. Hangus is notable because he was once a slave and fought as a gladiator in the arenas. He was freed and given a sizeable sum of money after winning a great victory in the arena. Hangus put his money to good use and built his own business. Hangus loves horses and breeds them. He loves to boast that he has the only two full blooded Sarlangan Horses in the province.

### 22. Gentle Ox (General Store):

This store sells a wide variety of non-perishable goods. A woman runs the store (Jiltris Malrane). Her husband mysteriously disappeared about ten years ago, about the time the thieves were burning down temples.

### 23. Grottle (Leather/Furriers):

This Grottle is occupied by leather-workers and furriers. Local citizens refer to this Grottle as 'Stench'. It seems that the furriers are a little lax in disposing of the animals' carcasses after they are skinned.

### 24. Grottle (Armorers):

This is an unusual Grottle and is occupied by a single clan. Armor for the Imperial Legions is made here and shipped to Abos. The head of the clan is Yartan Hars'fang. Under his stern supervision, bronze breast plates and shields are hammered out and polished to a high gleam.

### 25. Grottle (Lower-Class):

This grottle is similar to 15.

### The Saw-Backed Lunger

The Baltim River is infamous throughout the Empire because the deadly Lunger thrives in its muddy waters. This ambush predator preys on land-animals which travel along river banks and even low bridges. They wait unitl a suitable victim approaches the water's edge closely enough and then lunge from the water (the average Lunger can leap 10 to 15 feet) and ensares its victim with its barbed tail. (see SHADIS no. 8 for a full descriptive write-up and stats.)

### 26. Temple of Gron'Fyr:

This temple to the god of the dead sits in a remote area on the edge of town. The community graveyard is located behind the temple. The temple is nothing but a fire-gutted building now; the thieves did their work well. There is a small path leading into the forest near the temple which leads to a forest shrine.

### 27. Temple of Aknar:

Aknar is associated with wolves, Sturm-wolves in particular. The god is popular among thieves, soldiers, and hunters. It is purported that Aknar can bestow prowess and stealth upon the faithful.

### 28. Barracks (Slaves/Miners):

This large building serves as barracks for the mine workers. The building is made of stone and is fortified. There is a guard-house built into the barracks which houses eight guards and a captain.

### 29. Master of the Mines' Quarters:

This is where the officer in charge of the mines lives along with his family. The building also houses a guard room and a vault.

### 30. North Mine:

This is the entrance to North Mine. It was the first mine to be tunneled and is the deeper of the two.

### 31. South Mine:

This is the entrance to South Mine. It produces more copper than North Mine. A secret tunnel to the Thieves Guild runs from this mine. The entrance to this secret tunnel is concealed by several false support beams.

### Closing Notes

Teron is part of the Game Master's Workshop. GMs can take the setting, detail it further to fit the feel of their own campaign and simply drop it along a major trading route in their world.

GMs will find that the articles **Just Rewards for the Unjust** (SHADIS no. 8), and **Grod Mondre: Arena of Death** (SHADIS no. 10) will help flesh out this setting very nicely.

Furthermore, I offer an open invitation to our reading audience — if you design an adventure or further detail some aspect of Teron, send it on in. We may run an sequel to this article in the future.

JRB

❑

TERON
Town of Teron
Population: 2,700
Economy: Trade, Copper, Furs, Metalworking
Races: 95% Human, 5% other
Leader: (Name/Title): Reinus Atchinkar/Vard'Gra
Rader'Keem: Vintus Prator
Political Affiliation: Ragean Empire, Province of Abos
Graveyard
SADOK FOREST
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31

## Town Directory

Bldg No:

1 . . . . . Twist of Fate Inn
2 . . . . . Grottle (Farmers)
3 . . . . . Broken Forge Smitty (Blacksmith)
4 . . . . . Grottle (Bakers/Butchers)
5 . . . . . Warehouse
6 . . . . . Vard'Gra's (Mayor) Manor
7 . . . . . Town Hall/Guild Master's Forum
8 . . . . . Tomb of Sadotia
9 . . . . . Rader'Keem's (Judge) Estate
10 . . . . Stable
11 . . . . Vestimar Forum (Marketplatz)
12 . . . . Temple of Benyar
13 . . . . Temple of Shona
14 . . . . Grottle (Metal Workers)
15 . . . . Grottle (Lower Class)
16 . . . . Communal Crops
17 . . . . The Brass Tankard Inn
18 . . . . Imperial Patrol Barracks
19 . . . . Imperial Patrol Post (Point Teron)
20 . . . . Old Stone Keep (Prison)
21 . . . . Bright Copper (Blacksmith)
22 . . . . Gentle Ox (General Store)
23 . . . . Grottle (Leather/Furriers)
24 . . . . Grottle (Armorers)
25 . . . . Grottle (Lower Class)
26 . . . . Temple of Gron'Fyr
27 . . . . Temple of Aknar
28 . . . . Barracks (Slaves/Miners)
29 . . . . Master of the Mines Quarters
30 . . . . North Mine
31 . . . . South Mine

## Commodity Availability Index

**Transport: Water: Medium Land: High**
**Provisions: High**
**Arms/Armor: Medium**
**Misc: Medium**

GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

# The Good,

Artwork by Tonia Walden © 1995

## Zoe Gucumatz

**Occupation:** Anthropology
**Skills:** Anthropology, Ancient History
**Motivation:** Acquiring Knowledge
**Weaknesses:** Stubborn

Zoe Gucumatz is of Mexican heritage but was actually raised in California where she attend the University of Southern California. She graduated with a degree in anthropology and ancient history specializing in Middle and South American antiquities. For a while she earned money by tutoring at the university until she was selected to be part of a prestigious research project.

The project involved a field study of a newly discovered Mayan ruin in Guatemala and Zoe eagerly accepted the assignment. The trip was not particularly fruitful and seemed jinxed from the start.

Zoe was perplexed to hear strange stories from the local folk of disturbances in the area that seemed to have begun when the temple was first disturbed.

She took it upon herself to investigate further and came to the disturbing conclusion that the temple was still being used by a Mayan cult intent on protecting the site from outsiders. She has become obsessed with learning more of the ancient cult and the site. ❑

Tonia Walden

## Alan Jeffries

**Occupation:** Freelance Photographer
**Skills:** Photography, Occult Knowledge
**Motivation:** Obsession
**Weaknesses:** Gullible, Kind Hearted

Alan is good natured and kind but also rather insane. He collects anything on the supernatural phenomenon and has extensive files of photos, reports and newspaper clippings. He is obsessed with the supernatural but unfortunately he doesn't discriminate between what may be genuine reports and obvious lies — he believes all of it.

Alan has actually snapped pictures of genuine hauntings (which hasn't helped his sanity one little bit), but because of his dubious reputation no one will believe a word of his stories.

Luckily, for all of his eccentricities, he is a rather good photographer and manages to make a living selling photos to magazines and an occasional photo shoot of a wedding or christenings (just as long as he refrains from mixing with the guests).

Alan would much rather be pursuing his hobby and is easy to convince to come along on any trip that sounds as if it might be interesting. He recently got wind of Zoe's Mayan temple and has been trying to locate the site so he can photograph the cult practicing one of its dark rituals. ❑

Tonia Walden

## Bernadette O'Burne

**Occupation:** Tabloid Reporter
**Skills:** Brawling, Writing
**Motivation:** To become independent
**Weaknesses:** Lightning Quick Temper

Bernadette comes from a large Irish Catholic family who recently have emigrated to America. She is a short, young girl who often surprises people when her temper is aroused. Growing up with a large number of brothers has made her quite competent in a fight.

Although her family couldn't afford to send her to college, she found she had a talent for writing and managed to get a job with a local tabloid paper which reports on gossip, scandal and strange occurrences (most of which is blatant fabrication). She saw this as a way to gain financial independence and move away from home.

When following up on a story about a supposed vampire, Bernie actually saw the creature attack a person. She tried to help but was knocked unconscious. When she came around, both creature and victim were gone.

Bernie has no idea what happened that night, but she has started taking the supernatural seriously and is trying to find more factual examples of unexplained phenomenon. She is also trying to continue her investigation of the vampiric creature.

Bernie's path has crossed with Alan Jeffries several times. ❑

Tonia Walden

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CLP0001
'Assault on a Clydon Bridge'
(this illustration 20x24) $39.95
Illustration © 1995
Douglas Chaffee.

# Galactic Empires !!!

Galactic Empires is a science fiction trading card game. While in command of Sector Headquarters you conquer terrain; deploy bases, ships, crew and special equipment, and cautiously avoid space monsters, hazards and other occurrences. The objective: Eliminate your opponents' Sector HQs, conquering the sector and eventually the galaxy.

Players choose which empire they will represent: Krebiz, Argonian, Corporation, Mechad, Bolaar, Vektrean, Indirigan, Dragon, Scorpead, Clydon, Tufor, or P.O.T. More empires will be added to the game on a regular basis through additional expansion sets.

Game Mechanics: Each player uses his own deck of cards (Basic Game allows two players to use one deck). There can be as many or as few cards in the deck as you wish. Each turn consists of applying the output from your terrain to your bases & ships, playing cards from your hand and firing weapons.

The Cards Themselves: Each card is in dazzling full color from an assortment of different artists and illustrators. Each card has the rules needed to operate that ship, system, crew person, etc.

This card game is deceptively simple to learn. Even non-gamers pick it up quickly. More importantly, the game has the strategy of spaceship combat and a fantastic science fiction flair.

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GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

# The Bad,

Artwork by Tonia Walden © 1995

## The Men in Black Suits

**Occupation:** Unknown
**Skills:** Intimidation, Stealth
**Motivation:** Disinformation
**Weaknesses:** Single Minded, Humorless

The MIBS manifest as men dressed in black suits. They usually appear to occult/paranormal investigators who are too close to uncovering important information about the supernatural or unexplained phenomena (such as UFO sightings and abductions). The MIBS attempt to intimidate their target, saying they work for the government and that the investigator's research is threatening national security. However they will not say exactly which branch of government they represent and they are usually assumed to belong to the CIA or FBI.

They behavior and appearance is slightly odd and unsettling. They usually have extensive knowledge about the unfortunate investigator they are targeting.

After a visit by the MIBS, the target may start to have crippling headaches every time they attempt to talk about their discoveries. Occasionally unfortunate accidents may occur to the target or his associates.

Some people believe the MIBS are not government officials at all but emissaries of supernatural forces attempting to hamper the work of investigators. ❑

Tonia Walden

## Grant Blake

**Occupation:** Chaos Magician
**Skills:** Chaos Magic, Fast Talk
**Motivation:** Power
**Weaknesses:** Drinking, Over-confidence

Blake was born in Scotland in the fifties. He studied all sorts of esoteric philosophies and religions during his university years and became interested in magic in all its forms. He was fascinated with the idea that the natural order of the universe could be changed by the application of supernatural energies.

He particularly became fascinated with Chaos magic and made it his speciality. Magic requires energy to perform and Blake gains his from assimilating magical beings such as nature spirits (or fairies as they are also known) which makes him their sworn enemy.

Blake has been hunting them for years now, whenever he needs to perform a ritual, and he has become very adept at avoiding their cunning traps and taunts. He uses his magic usually for personal gain or for anarchist reasons — he has a strong dislike for organized religion.

Blake is an interesting companion, though not particularly trustworthy. His hobbies are collecting paraphernalia from the 1960s and pub crawling (which is an easy way to make him become chatty). ❑

Tonia Walden

## Rose Marie

**Occupation:** Psychic Con-Artist
**Skills:** Electronics, Gadgetry
**Motivation:** Accumulating wealth
**Weaknesses:** Poor Health

Rose was born to an English family but was brought up by her aunt after she was orphaned at an early age. Her aunt was interested in the occult and used to hold seances at her house which fascinated young Rose.

She realized that by a bit of trickery, her aunt's friends could be convinced that ghosts were visiting them. There was money to be made from the gullible and Rose soon developed a repertoire of "psychic" talents that she could use to trick people. Her real love was electronics and she put herself through college with her part time "psychic" skills.

Rose doesn't believe in the supernatural as she realizes how easy it is to fake such phenomena with gadgets and gismos. However, she is an invaluable source of occult lore and is an expert at fixing, sabotaging or altering electrical equipment to produce all sorts of biszare effects.

She is also commonly sought out to expose other fakes by detecting their tricks and equipment. ❑

Tonia Walden

GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

# and the Ugly

Artwork by Tonia Walden © 1995

## Koblo

**Type:** African Spirit
**Skills:** Psychic assault
**Motivation:** Death and destruction
**Weaknesses:** Bound to fetish

Koblo is a spirit that has been bound to a fetish (statuette) by an African sorcerer. He is used by the sorcerer to search out those who have committed crimes; he then destroys the criminal. The fetish he is bound to resembles a human figure carved from wood and its lower half is bound with cloth. The sorcerer sometimes inserts nails into the fetish to make Koblo angry when he is going to send him out against a criminal.

If Koblo's fetish should come into the possession of someone other than the creating sorcerer, he will not be able to be controlled and may cause random death and destruction. If his fetish is destroyed he will be free and may return to his own realm. However he may decide to haunt the local area until he is captured or expelled by another sorcerer. He can be talked to through a medium, as he is intelligent but also very angry and stubborn. ❑

Tonia Walden

## Baron Samedi

**Type:** Voodoo Death Spirit
**Skills:** Possession
**Motivation:** Guarding the dead
**Weaknesses:** Rum

Baron Samedi is one of the Guede who are the spirits of death of the Voodoo religion of Haiti. Other members of the Guede include Baron Cemetery, Baron Cross and Mamam Bridgitte. They are part of the huge number of loa (spirits or gods) of the Voodoo religion. The Guede are wise due to the knowledge they accumulate from the spirits of the dead and they protect graveyards from desecration and bodysnatchers.

Their followers give the Guede offerings such as rum and tobacco to gain favors. Voodoo involves possession of the willing worshippers by the loa. The worshipper goes into a trance and then takes on the personality of the spirit. If a follower is possessed by the Guede they always act in a reckless outlandishly manner and will attempt to seduce members of the opposite sex.

They are powerful spirits and are often beyond the control of mediums (or hougans). The Guede resemble undertakers wearing black top hats and frock coats. Alternately they may mimic the appearances of corpses dressing up in bandages. ❑

Tonia Walden

## Yarama

**Type:** Vampiric bush creature
**Skills:** Ambush
**Motivation:** Feeding and sleeping
**Weaknesses:** Laziness

The Yarama is a vampire of Australian Aboriginal myth. It lives in trees in isolated bushland usually near a body of water, which it knows thirsty animals and humans will stop at to drink. The Yarama waits until a victim passes underneath its hiding spot and then pounces.

It fastens onto the unfortunate person by means of the suckers it has on the end of its hands and feet and then drains them of blood. It then swallows its victim whole. Sometimes the victim may escape by forcing its way out of the creature's stomach while it is asleep. Unfortunately, they are doomed to become a Yarama after they die.

Attacks from this creature can be prevented by making a small incision in one's body and offering up a protection prayer before entering an area thought to be inhabited by Yarama. This free letting of blood means the Yarama cannot come and take it forcibly. ❑

Tonia Walden

GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

# Hook, Line & Sinker™

## Adventures on the Fly!

Edited by Jolly R. Blackburn

### What is a Hook, Line & Sinker?

*Hook, Line & Sinker* is one of the most popular columns to have appeared in SHADIS. For the benefit of our new readers, an HLS is a brief plot-line for an adventure presented in a simple format. HLS scenarios are generic and designed to give the Gamemaster the seeds for an adventure that he can build around. They come in handy when the GM has nothing else prepared, or finds the party has outpaced him and the prepared adventure suddenly ends. Readers are encouraged to submit HLS scenarios for any genre.

### Explanation

**Hook.** The current situation or location of the adventuring party.

**Line.** An opportunity for adventure that presents itself to the party. A *line* is normally presented as a short paragraph. Think of the line as the "bait" to lure the party into an adventure.

**Sinker.** The clincher to the *line*. The sinker presents the GM with a dilemma that makes the situation a true adventure.

### A Dirty Low Down Shaman

**Hook:** A forest or tropical jungle is the starting point for this adventure. For reasons that become clear later on, the party should be far from civilization.
**Line:** One or more members of the party begin experiencing extremely unpleasant symptoms ranging from nausea and dizziness to acute shortness of breath. The cause of these symptoms should not be readily apparent but everything from a rare tropical disease to bites from poisonous insects may be suggested by the GM. Magical cures will prove ineffective and the debilitating effects of the ailment will soon reach alarming proportions. When all seems lost, the party will encounter a shaman/herbalist who professes expertise in treating this specific magic-resistant malady. The shaman/herbalist will charge the party an exorbitant fee for the "cure". This cure consists of several potions and elixers administered over the course of several weeks. A shrewd businessman, the shaman will bankrupt the party, but the symptoms will subside, supposedly due to the shaman's ministrations.
**Sinker:** At the next village, the party will notice a young lad suffering from symptoms identical to those which affected them. There they will learn that a certain plant indigenous to the area produces allergic reactions in most people. The villagers use ordinary poultices to treat the afflicted and the symptoms subside after a week or so on their own. Now the party must find the charlatan who duped them.

David Lashley

### A Conspiracy Behind Every Tree

**Hook:** The party is lounging in a tavern when an aging man bursts in ranting about a threat to the duchess (or other local noble). "The Dark Riders have returned!" he shouts as he is escorted from the premises. All of the town locals recognize the old man as Kalos, a crazy old man who has been predicting threats on the duchess' life for years and years now. His reputation is so poor that even when the duchess' husband is poisoned two nights later no one credits Kalos' warning.
**Line:** The duchess is offering a hefty reward for the capture of those responsible for her husband's murder. Adventurers and investigators from far and wide are converging on the city to collect the reward. Kalos finds one or two of the party members and motions them into an alley. He claims to know where those responsible for the attack operate from, and volunteers to lead the party there. He explains that in his younger years he was quite the adventurer. His last encounter was years ago against a group known as the Dark Riders, a band formed long ago by the duchess' brother as a means to destroy his sister and to gain him the throne.
**Sinker:** Kalos is now the leader of the Dark Riders. The duchess' brother died in their first attempts to wrest power from his sister. Since then, Kalos, his devoted and fanatical follower, has raised a new group of Dark Riders from the children of the original Dark Riders and children he had abducted over the years. Over the years, Kalos has become dedicated to killing the duchess. His plan is to lure the party into an ambush, kill them, and have his soldiers present them to the duchess as the kidnappers. Since he knows all the circumstances surrounding the duke's murder, he can frame the party perfectly. And after his Dark Riders have won the duchess' favor, it will be an easy thing to kill her off.

Danyl Landis

### Been There, Done That

**Hook:** The party is in the middle of prowling through some dungeon, mad wizard's fortress, haunted castle, etc., when they enter a room inhabited with some nasty critters, and a vault type door.
**Line:** The party dispatches the nasty critters, who should be something appropriate for the dungeon, but of moderate strength

compared to the characters. In other words, not too tough, but not pushovers either. Having slain the monsters, the party should be able to open the vault door, but instead of treasure behind the vault door, they find a corridor that seems to go some distance with a door at the end.

**Sinker:** If the party goes down the corridor, and through the door, they'll find themselves in a room exactly like the one they just left, with the same creatures to be fought. If they retreat down the corridor, they'll find the vault door closed, and if they open it, they'll find the same room, with the same creatures to be fought again, as if they had never been killed in the first place. In other words, the party is caught in some mad wizard's pet time loop, and will have to figure out how to deactivate it before they are either killed, or can finish their adventure, otherwise they'll always be heading into that same room, to fight those same creatures again. The device to turn it off could be whatever your fertile imagination comes up with (a small glyph carved in the wood of the doorway, wall torch that has to be pulled, some type of item on one of the deceased creatures, etc.). It shouldn't be impossible to figure out, but don't give it to the players either; make them use their brains and not their brawn for this one.

Michael Lampman

## You Bet Your Life

**Hook:** Seeking shelter from a sudden storm, the party seeks refuge in a decrepit old castle inhabited by a gnarled old man.

**Line:** While the party waits out the storm, the old man suggests that they pass the time by playing a game of chance. Pleading that he is quite poor, the old man suggests that the group play him for "Points" instead of cash.

**Sinker:** The old man is, in fact, a powerful and ancient mage. The "Points" that the players play for are bits of their own life energies which the mage absorbs eash time a player loses (and they will lose a lot — the mage will see to that)! Before long, the players will notice themselves growing weaker, while the old man seems to be getting stronger with each game. In order to regain their lost energies, the players will have to defeat and destroy the mage, whose magic is still quite powerful.

Donald E. Brynelsen

## The Insufferable Imp

**Hook:** In this space–oriented scenario, the players are exploring the ruins of an ancient and technologically advanced society where they make several discoveries.

**Line**: One of the things that the party discovers is a large jar like object that is sealed tightly and marked with ancient and indecipherable writing.

**Sinker**: X–rays and other forms of scanning fail to penetrate the jar, so it's inevitable that someone will open it to see what's inside. When this happens, a small troll–like creature escapes and immediately sets to work fouling up any mechanical devices in the vicinity. The players will then have to catch the little gremlin (he's very fast and cunning), and try to retrap him in the jar. The troll is not malicious, he's just fascinated by mechanical things and loves to take them apart to see how they work. Unfortunately, he is not as good at putting them back together again, so the players will have their hands full trying to repair the damage he causes.

Donald E. Brynelsen

## Trainees' First Day

**Hook:** The party consists of a group of rookie characters dedicated to fighting evil supernatural creatures in eitrher modern–day times or slightly in the future. The characters are going on their first mission away from the training center the next morning and so go to sleep.

**Line:** The characters wake up in a small bed–and–breakfast. Talking to the locals, the players find out that they have been checking out a run–down "haunted" mansion on the edge of town for a "movie shoot" (or some other cover story). The team leader (an NPC the party knows nothing about, but everybody talks of him) was seen going back to the house late last night after bringing the characters back to "their" rooms. When the players go to the mansion, a mist surrounds the house. It is extremely corrosive and will slowly dissolve anything put into it, even if the object is later removed. Outside communication is impossible. The team leader is found, transformed into a vampire with no free will of his own. His master is a very powerful hybrid of several evil creatures. Because of his unique nature, the party has to discover how to kill the master creature with supplies found in the house.

**Sinker:** After the party dies or kills the master, they again wake up, this time back in training headquarters hooked up to a "dream computer," a device that controls dreams in the participants to make the dream seem exactly like reality. Memories start flooding back, reminding them how their characters agreed to this "mental training." Everything up until that point had been a powerful and strictly controlled dream manufactured by the trainers for the trainees' learning. All minor NPCs were controlled by one person, but the team leader and his "master" were two other agents.

Dennis M. Yates

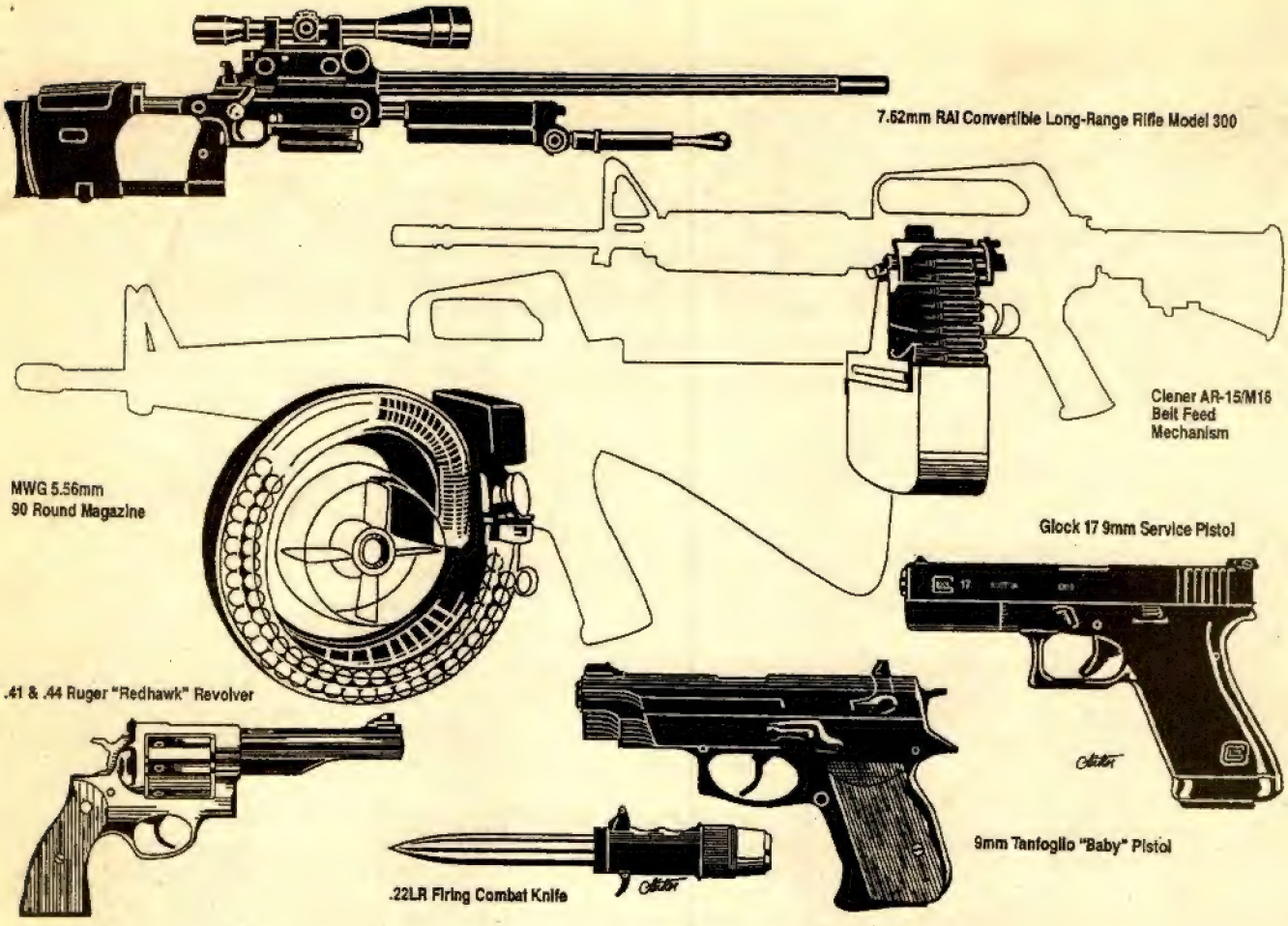
## The Blunderer

**Hook:** This HLS, though designed for FASA's Earthdawn setting, can be easily adjusted to fit into any campaign. It can be used as the start of an adventure or merely just a distraction from the main action. In this encounter, one or more PCs are walking through the merchant's quarter of a city (perhaps Batertown or Kratas) when one of the PCs is bumped into by a young boy, who promptly drops a small bone tube.

**Line:** The boy apologizes repeatedly as he tries to retrieve the tube, but only suceeds in dropping more small items. If the PC(s) try to help the lad, he expresses his thanks, while hurryingly gathering up most of his possession, and then runs off into the crowd leaving several small trinkets and the the tube on the ground.

**Sinker:** The boy is really a novice thief adept who, amazingly enough, was actually able to lift the money purse of the PC, which he or she discovers missing sometime later. During the swipe, however, the bungling thief was unable to hang on to a tube he had recently stolen from a large, now angry ork. The tube contains a map to an old kear located within the Wastes or Badlands that the orc and his companions had yet to finish plundering. Should the PCs try to use the map, they will most likely incounter the ork and discover just how unhappy he is about the theft.

Ian Reid

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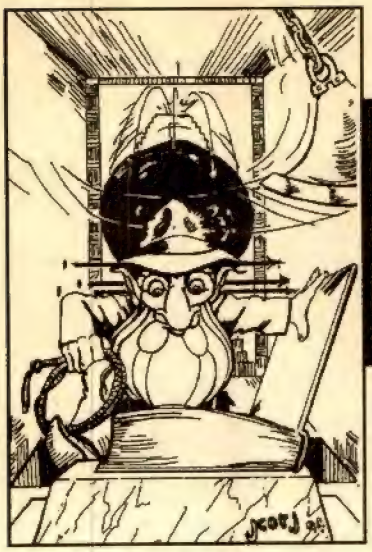

# Closer Look

## Reviews of Games and Related Products.

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### RoboRally

**Wizards of the Coast**

**Reviewed by David Williams**

**RoboRally** is the game that Richard Garfield brought to *Wizards of the Coast* before he showed them **Magic: the Gathering**. RoboRally was initially turned down (or put on the back burner) in favor of the collectible card game, but with the success of Magic, WotC has the resources to produce RoboRally.

RoboRally is a manic racing game. Each player controls a robot running through a chaotic factory floor. The gameboard (factory floor) is made up from 1 to 6 boards that can be laid out in any arrangement you wish. Each board has its own style, and obstacles. There are a variety of obstacles to your robot's journey, including bottomless pits, treadmills, spinning gears, pushers, lasers, walls, crushers, and the other robots that you're competing against.

Each turn, players get a number of movement cards, and "program" their robot's next 5 moves by selecting which cards to use. The unpredictability of the game occurs when players start bumping into each other and the rest of your program sends your hapless robot spinning off in the opposite direction from the direction you planned out with your carefully prepared program.

Because of this, RoboRally seems to work best with a 4–6 player game. Eight pewter pieces (designed in his uniquely comic style by Phil Foglio) are included in the game, but 7–8 players is a bit crowded and 2–3 players doesn't really provide the unpredictability that makes the game fun.

Another fun aspect of RoboRally that deserves mention is the "Robot Dance of LUUUVE" (spoken with a deep, sensuous voice). This happens when all of the players are looking at the cards have been dealt and are trying to imagine the effects of the turns and moves. All the players start twisting and pointing, figuring out their turns.

All of the pieces (boards, pewter figures, and pieces) are high quality, and good looking, but the price tag is still pretty hefty. Wizards did not cut corners, but it would be nice to have a cheaper option, perhaps without pewter pieces.

### Elysium

**White Wolf Game Studio**

**Vampire: the Masquerade sourcebook**

**Reviewed by D. J. Trindle**

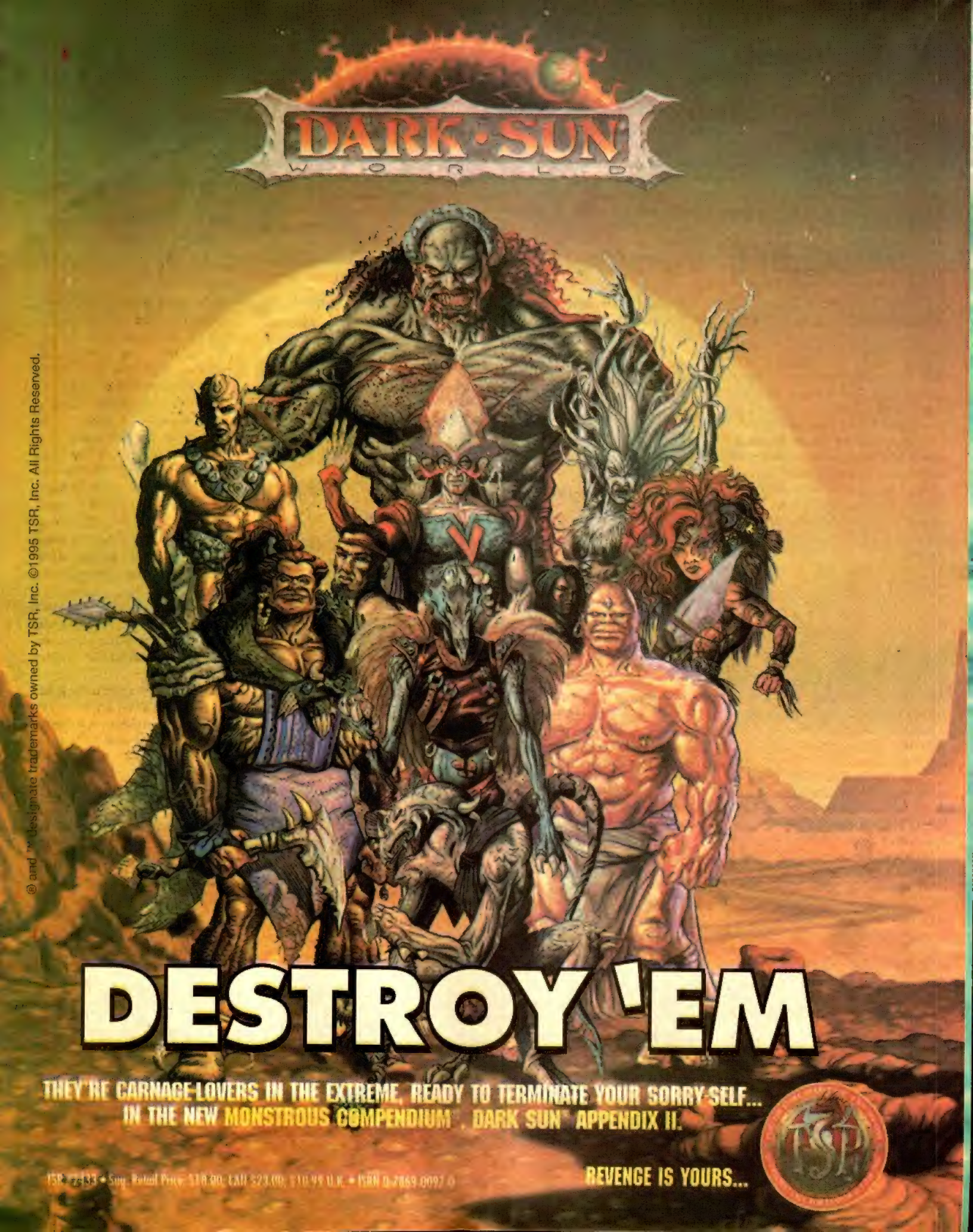
**Elysium** is the latest **Vampire: the Masquerade** offering from *White Wolf*, and it gives us a look at the world of elder vampires. When I first glanced at this supplement, I thought "Oh great — a sourcebook for munchkins." After reading it, it would seem that I wasn't terribly far off. If your **V:tM** players tend toward the minimaxing munchkin stereotype, keep them far away from this supplement. If, however, you have more mature players who can roleplay a tremendously powerful immortal being, you're likely to find **Elysium** rewarding.

This supplement will in all likelihood find more employment with the Storyteller than the players. There is a very useful guide for Storytellers not accustomed to roleplaying vampires who have had hundreds of years to practice their demagogery and manipulation techniques. To quote **Elysium**, "None of us really know what it is like to command an army of exceptionally polite, smiling, spiteful undead. Well, OK, none of us besides former Homecoming Queens." This could be enormously advantageous if the campaign has been set up in a "Charlie's Angels" format, i.e. the players are all childer of a single elder who sends them out on missions.

Alternately, the players could be a pack of elders who are, for some reason, running together. Although this is a fearsome prospect, such a group has a lot of natural enemies. Long-lived [sic] vampires naturally accumulate foes: it's difficult to live for a couple hundred years without annoying somebody, and if they're still around, they're likely powerful as well. The Sabbat would react to news of a pack of roaming elders by telling their members "There's a six-pack of Diablerie Tastee-Snax walking around. Go get 'em!"

If, however, you feel up to it — or if you just want to have a fully-fleshed-out NPC elder — there is quite a lot of rules information here. Although there's no sample elder (a bit disappointing), there is a lot of information, including new and expanded backgrounds, new Merits and Flaws, and a six-page character sheet to keep track of it all. Players who will run elders work very closely with the Storyteller in order to fill in the much richer background needed for a 300 year-old vampire. I was, however, annoyed at what seemed a gratuitous balancing of specialties among the clans. With the addition of a new background, Military Force, and counting Disciplines as a source of power, we suddenly have seven convenient ways for elders to gather power — one per clan. The Gangrel have the best Allies? The *Malkavians* have the most mundane Influence? Go ahead and make it unbalanced, guys. Unlife isn't fair. People mature enough to play an elder vampire ought to be mature enough to make clan decisions based on roleplaying, not power levels.

Finally, speaking of power levels, the Age background can really screw up a game in a hurry. Storytellers need to be careful about allowing a lot of points in Age, as each dot gives more and more freebie points to the already-powerful vampire character. The aforementioned munchkins can, with appropriate purchases, have an eighteen-die Dice Pool for certain tasks. The Storyteller must also rigidly enforce the ten-point maximum on Merits. One of the only checks on this sort of thing is the rule that each Ability or Attribute that ends up high-

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er than 6 costs the character a Derangement.

Overall, **Elysium** is a useful sourcebook, albeit moreso for Storytellers than for players. I would be wary of running an elder-based campaign, but if you feel up to it, **Elysium** will show you the way.

**Hudson City Blues**
Hero Games
RPG Supplement
Reviewed by Mitch Michaelson

Guns hurl a stream of bullets. Tires screech. Innocents scream. Sirens wail. Doctors struggle to patch together a 14-year-old kid. It's midnight in the city — do you know where your Player Character is?

The setting for **Dark Champions™** is a fictional east coast burg called Hudson City. Several supplements have detailed the crime-ridden city and its inhabitants (innocent and otherwise). **Hudson City Blues** is the first adventure to support that setting.

The premise behind the adventure is that someone is trying to blackmail the criminals in Hudson City. That someone has access to very detailed information on druglords, vice kingpins, and organized crime of all sorts. Not surprisingly, the gangsters don't take kindly to the extortion. A battle erupts for control of our not-so-fair city's underworld. The Player Characters are in the middle of it.

The best part of HCB is its organization. It's detailed, to the point of breaking down how a battle should proceed, segment by segment. Each major event is clearly described and has distinct goals and explanations of what constitutes success. The ideas for filling in the small gaps of the adventure are good, creating memorable scenes and fleshing out PCs. The pregenerated characters are complete, even to the point of calculating Combat Values for different maneuvers.

I wasn't excited with the characters provided, though. Two of the four female characters turned to vigilantism due to abuse by males. All the female characters were beautiful and all the males dull. The Comeliness of the females were 18, 14, 16, and 12; the males were 12, 10, 10, and 12. A male character's fiancé was also sexually abused. While I believe that, in roleplaying games, PC should stand for Player Character and not Politically Correct, I still thought Hudson City Blues was stereotypical.

Also, in technical terms, HCB ranks low. One character uses rubber bullets in her assault rifle to knock out villains. Rubber bullets are not normal bullets made of rubber rather than lead. In that case, they would still penetrate and probably kill. They are big, single-shot objects that look like cylinders or small beanbags. Also, some thugs carry LAW rockets. A LAW would be extremely difficult to hit a person with, and would not do much explosive damage aside from the object they struck. These are fine effects for Hollywood, but players seeking a "realistic" campaign would probably scoff. And as usual, there are some pretty strange powers littered among the characters.

One of the best elements to include in a roleplaying supplement is a play aid or two. HCB has tons. They include some specifically for the adventure, like calendars and a "scorecard" to record events, as well as several generic ones for Dark Champions play. (Oddly, there are no maps to go along with the adventure, possibly due to the tendency for them not to match the text.) About a third of the book are pregenerated characters and resources.

Another thing to slip into roleplaying supplements lately are story arcs. Those are simply references to other products. The reason why game companies do this isn't simply mercenary, to sell other products, but also to provide consistent and more in-depth settings. Hero Games has committed to including more story arcs, so an interesting villain won't show up once and never reappear. Instead, options are included to involve many of the characters and plots from other supplements.

The editing of HCB is average for Hero Games. They still have trouble italicizing words, since some are unnecessarily or only partially italicized. For some reason, there are numerous semicolons scattered throughout the text where they shouldn't be. And of course, there's the requisite sentence that got cut off.

The writing is better than average. The only thing that really bothered me was the hype. They use the word "epic" far too much. It comes up over half a dozen times a page in some places, as if bragging about the adventure. Also, the author writes as if he's talking to himself, with one word sentences like "Right." and "Absolutely." By and large though, I found HCB to be easy to read.

The best part of Hudson City Blues is the cover. It's a striking image of a vengeful-looking SWAT team member standing outside a burning building. Look for it at your local game store! The interior art is still bland, though. A lot of it looks hurried and hastily done; some of it is duplicated from other Hero Games books.

Hudson City Blues does a decent job of showing how a gangland war would play out in Dark Champions. It includes lots of suggestions applicable to such a campaign, and does an excellent job of sticking to the genre. Whether you find the plot or the characters exciting or dull is subjective, but I recommend getting Hudson City Blues to see for yourself. Hey, after all, it's Epic, right? Right.

**HeroMaker 2.11**
Hero Software
RPG computer aid
Capsuled by Wayne Wallace

In late 1993, Hero Software, as part of the still-vaporous Champions: The Computer Game, created HeroMaker. The idea was that not only would one get a computer game, but a character generator that would work both for the computer game and the paper-and-pencil RPG.

HeroMaker has become very popular, eliminating any math problems any Hero player or GM ever had, as the character creation points are consistently added up 100% of the time by the computer. It used to be that writing down the points spent for powers, attributes, etc. and adding them up or playing with the numbers to min-max the best powergaming ratio would take a while. Now, it takes barely 5 minutes, for a speedy typist, to write up a strong brute with a few skills, or the expert sharpshooter with his big gun, jet-pack, and gem-cutting skills, while a half-hour will do for a tinkerer in most cases.

HeroMaker is very mouse-intensive, but every function has a keyboard equivalent. The mouse is definitely the way to go, however. A left mouse click or two will activate any of the "raised buttons" that HeroMaker uses for such things as power selection, modifying attributes, etc. HeroMaker also has areas where a single click lets you start typing in text, such as the name of the character, a power or disadvantage description and so forth.

The screen itself is a character sheet. One may click on an area's general button to bring that area into its full-screen mode, as other side areas disappear to make room for all the text you have. On the main screen, Energy Blast might be "10d6 EB," but on the Powers screen, there would be many lines; one for "10d6 Energy Blast," another for "tachyon laser," another for "-1/2 X2 Endurance," and so on.

The layout of the character sheet on-screen resembles the one we have come to know and love in the Hero rulebook: stats in upper left, powers down the center from top to bottom, and, as a change, disadvantages on the right. The hardcopy, however, is exactly as you remember it from the Hero book, but you have the option to use any of the logos many old Hero books. If you never thought a character sheet could be really cool, now's the time to change your mind! You don't need a laser printer either. You can save as a normal text file, or turn off the graphic portions of printing so your old line printer can speedily deliver character sheets.

HeroMaker supports all character types, including Spirits, AI, Bases, Vehicles, Automatons (and their powers), etc. You name it in HERO and HeroMaker has it!

So, after hearing a small bit about it, you want to know: so, should I buy it? If you're a Hero fan with a computer, yes! A mere $25 will let your gaming group organize their characters and try out new ideas that would have wasted hours before. If not, talk to a Hero friend. For a good showing, just go to the Hero Games booth at a gaming convention. The $10 character disks will be reviewed in a later issue. ❑

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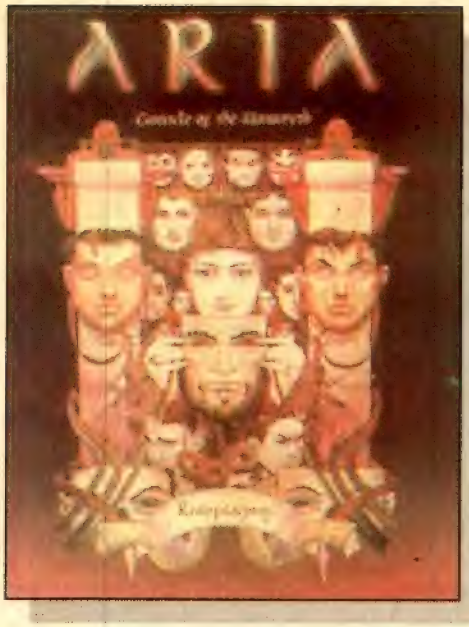


# ARIA

## Canticle of the Monomyth & Worlds Sourcebook

# Feature Review

**By Thomas D. Gorman**

*Ocassionally, SHADIS runs a review of a game system that sparks a reaction from readers who feel the review didn't accurately portray the product.*

*Since reviews are little more than the opinions of the reviewer - this is understandable. Last issue we ran a capsule review of ARIA, (which was very positive by the way). Several readers contacted me complaining that ARIA had much more to offer than what was covered. I challenged one of those readers to write the feature review presented here.*

*JRB*

**ARIA Canticle of the Monomyth & Worlds sourcebook**

**Roleplaying book, 500 pages, $30**
**Worlds sourcebook, 300 pages, $26**

**Bottom Line:** Create your own FRPG environment with realistic and detailed rules.
**Presentation:** Clear but wordy, functional.
**Rules:** Straight forward mechanics, many optional details, assumes GM experience.
**Value:** Worth the price and maybe more.

**ARIA** is primarily a rules system that allows a roleplaying group to create its own fantasy roleplaying environment. However, all of the things you would expect to see in any roleplaying game are there: character creation, combat rules, magic, and so on. The difference that is most immediately apparent is that **ARIA** doesn t have a setting of its own and has no rules that are specific to any setting.

After that discovery the reader may (as I did) return to the preface to help bring the game into better focus. There he will discover that **ARIA** is about **MYTH**: myth creation and exploration.

*"Throughout history, peoples and cultures have told stories of their gods, heroes, and villains in order to better understand the world around them. Heroes embody a cultures highest ideals while villains manifest its ancient dreads personified. James Joyce and Joseph Campbell focus on the journey of the Hero, the sacred quest as the One Myth or Monomyth, which represents in mythic language the seeking of cultures after their own identity.*

***ARIA Canticle of the Monomyth** is a roleplaying game system which attempts to embody this connection between hero and culture."*

Wow! That paragraph hooked me. Let s explore whether my feelings were justified.

### Just the facts, Ma'am!

Beginning with the basics, most action attempts in **ARIA** require a persona to make a successful *Trial*. Although there are several different kinds of *Trial* — *Attribute Trials, Expertise Trials, Influence Trials*, etc. — each type works in basically the same way.

A player rolls a ten-sided die and compares the result to a predetermined *Adjusted Trial Chance*. If the roll is less than or equal to the *Trial Chance*, the Trial is successful. The Trial's Degree of Success is determined by the difference between the *Adjusted Trial Chance* and the actual value of the die roll.

An *Adjusted Trial Chance* is found by adding your rank (a number from 1-10) to a base (usually 3) and subtracting the difficulty of the task (usually a number from 1-10). Open-ended rolls are made using the Rule of One-and-Ten. If either of these numbers is rolled you may roll again and add the result, either negatively or positively effecting an already good or bad roll.

In this way *Mythic Successes* (and likewise *Mythic Failures*) are possible. This mechanic is, with few variations, used throughout **ARIA**.

The fun really starts with creation of your roleplaying environment. I say environment and not world because your environment can be a village, town, city, county, country, or culture.

**ARIA's** rules handle creation of all these things. The parameters that govern creation at one level are the same that govern it at another, so the parameters may be properly called telescopic.

**ARIA Worlds** leaves no stone unturned. Considered elements include society concept, society age, philosophical orientation, interaction with neighboring groups, technology, subsistence, social mobility, politics, economic infrastructure, military infrastructure, hierarchy of social positions, etc.

Once these elements have been quantified for a particular environment, narrative histories may be created.

*Narrative history* making is a unique design convention. Simply put, players may take on the role of societies, political agencies, countries, and roleplay their histories. This is handled on a time scale called narrative time which usually consists of interval lengths of one, five, or ten years. When conflict arises it is handled via trials.

In *Narrative Histories*, Trials can be used to settle all kinds of questions, ques-

tions like 'How was the harvest this year?', 'Will there be a civil war?', or 'Who won that military engagement?'.

*Reality design* is the design of the magical and religious reality for your environment.

*Omnessence* forms the stuff of any *Reality*, and represents power in raw form. There are four principal questions which must be answered when designing a reality: Where does *Omnessence* come from? How does one obtain it? What can it do? Who can use it? **ARIA** gives complete guidelines for answering these questions and creating spells. In fact, there are no premade spells or spell lists so each group must create their own. By following the guidelines each group creates a cosmology that is self-contained and complete.

**ARIA** is a complete roleplaying game system as well as a design tool, so it includes a combat system and skills. Combat in **ARIA** is detailed and includes many attack and defense options, a complete list of hit locations, weapon and armor breakage, and unarmed combat. There are no hit points but rather a wound system that directly affects how well a character continues to stand and fight. When two characters are fighting the attacker declares an attack, strike location is determined, the defender chooses a defense action and makes a trial, the attacker makes a trial based on his strike chance and the type of attack he is using. The attacker's degree of success is compared on a chart to the defender's degree of success to determine the damage dealt.

Character creation in **ARIA** is intimately connected to what has come before, creation of the narrative environment. It was environment creation that determined what type of society the character may be from, what values are important to his society and therefore his family and himself, what types of vocations are available, and what types of skills.

From there the player must come up with a character concept, which is an overall idea of who and what their character is. **ARIA** characters are built by the player using points. He may have certain advantages or disadvantages that cost points or add points to his starting total. ARIA players are encouraged to start with the character's background beginning with his development within his family and then later through his vocational choices, picking up skills and possibly reputation along the way.

Skills in **ARIA** are divided into 3 categories: *talents, aptitudes, and disciplines*. Most of the skill descriptions are broadly based, allowing for more specific applications/descriptions based on their use in any particular setting. For example, one talent is simply Physical and covers most specific movement related activities.

To narrow its focus you must choose an aspect such as *Physical (climbing)* or *Physical (throwing)*. A skill's base rank is a modified average of those attributes that might apply to its use. Using *Physical* again as an example, its primary attribute (the primary attribute must always be included in the calculation) is *Agility*.

The player must then choose two facets from a choice of *Strength, Endurance, Quickness*, and *Manual Dexterity*. The idea behind choosing facets is that each persona approaches a particular expertise differently and uses his own abilities (the Attributes) to their best advantage. These three attributes are then averaged and this number is divided by six. The rank base then, for normal humans, is between one and five.

## The way I see it:

The first part of this article has been a broad overview of **ARIA** and touches upon some of its unique aspects. What you are probably wondering now is how well it plays. The answer is, "Well! —with a few exceptions." However, I like to start with the negative and end with the positive so I'll get my complaints off my chest first.

There are lots of tables that detail things like difficulty modifiers for skill use, point costs and the like, which are properly placed in their sections but can be a bear to hunt for if needed in the course of a game.

As a gamemaster with some experience, I found less need for them than someone else might because I've had practice determining what might be considered a modifying factor from running other games. I would have found a listing of tables or, better yet, a collection of them all in one place to be very useful. Last Unicorn Games is planning to release a Mythguide's Pack (combination GM-screen and supplement) which should go a long way towards fixing this problem.

**ARIA** allows for *Social Trials*. These are trials that govern things like the effect of your character's reputation on an individual or group, his ability to influence others, etc. I have mixed feelings about this aspect of **ARIA**. While the most interesting element of roleplaying is social interaction, rules for social interaction can take the place of good roleplaying. However, when interactions occur on a larger scale, for instance a character attempting political influence on behalf of his family, the **ARIA** rules are a great boon.

Before **ARIA** I unconsciously avoided interactions of large scale between nations and political groups because there seemed to be no unbiased, intelligent way of resolving them, particularly where the characters played a part. **ARIA** presents intelligent, realistic guidelines for handling such interactions and I now find that I'm allowing player characters to play a vital role in shaping their environment to a degree I'd have felt uncomfortable with before.

The scope of roleplaying is tremendously broadened and a more mythic grandeur is lent to the whole experience.

There are no rules for creating creatures. It may be that this was cut out for reasons of space. **ARIA** Roleplaying is almost 500 pages as is! Plans are to release these rules as part of the upcoming **MythGuide's Pack**.

We all felt (myself and my intrepid players) that while the *Reality* chapter of the Roleplaying Book had a lot of helpful ideas, it had too many elements. Here it was best for us to have a good idea of what we wanted before we looked at the **ARIA** rules. This section is primarily the purview of the gamemaster and I found that the plethora of terms alone made this section of the rules a bit confusing. All of us felt mired in 'gamespeak'; here's a small example:

*"All Preparation Aspects are described as either Required or Possible. Required Aspects must be chosen for specific Origins, Archetypes or Dominions, while Possible Aspects represent Preparation methods which may be chosen (and which often yield additional Omnessence)."*

**ARIA** is a lot of work; nothing is done for you. This is a great set of guidelines but it is not for the creatively squeamish or lazy. When you consider that you and your group are starting from scratch to create a setting, you can become frightened by the magnitude of the task ahead.

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However, the setting that you create with **ARIA** will be a setting that is viable, detailed, and realistic. We found that already knowing what we wanted our environment to be like made the creation process less laborious than it might have otherwise been. The **ARIA** rules suggested some ideas that didn't occur to us and helped fill out detail that our environment would have lacked.

Group creation of the roleplaying environment was *fun*! At first everyone was a little withdrawn. The whole idea of the players helping to create the setting was new to us all. We started by thinking in broad terms of the geography of the place we'd be playing in. After a few ideas were accepted we began to draw a map of our setting.

Once we had a visual representation to focus on there was no holding us back! As the mythguide, I was in charge of guiding the group and I made sure that we did not talk in terms of numbers. Once we had our ideas on paper we then began to translate some of those ideas into quantities. This is an important point: **ARIA** can be very confusing when an attempt is made to come up with quantities before good ideas. These are creation guidelines , not hard and fast rules. Sticking to the letter of the law will kill the spirit.

A great side-effect of group creation was that the players played with a much greater feeling of place; they roleplayed in character and seemed much more interested than those times I threw them into a place of my own creation that they had not previously explored. In fact, their interest in the setting and their characters for our first play session was at a level that I don't normally see before the third session of some other games we've played.

As someone with an appreciation for myth, I really liked roleplaying our *Narrative History*. Its on this level that mythic subjects are evoked. There is a line inside the **Worlds Book** that sums it up: History is the greatest reflection of myth, mimicking its cyclical nature by exploring the endless ways of death and rebirth.

As a roleplaying game system **ARIA** is decent. I say only 'decent' not because there are any flaws in it; I like the trial system, which requires no complex equations, needs only one ten-sided die, and allows for varying degrees of success and failure, thereby creating variety of outcomes beyond simple pass/fail tests. I like the combat system, even though it is interminably slow going until the group has had some experience playing with it. I admit, too, that I have a preference for detailed combat systems and **ARIA** doesn't disappoint. High on my list of considerations for a game system is intelligence. Are all game stats related to each other in a logical way? Are similar or identical conventions for task resolution used throughout the system? Do the rules accurately portray real life situations where they should?

The answer for **ARIA** is yes. But I know that it's likely that anyone reading this has a favorite game system already. What you want to know is whether **ARIA**'s system is better than what you're using. I'll bet it's at least as good, but nothing about it makes it better than my favorites.

Which leads me to another important point. **ARIA** can be used in so many different ways that it is hard for me to imagine a gamemaster who couldn't use it. You could use it for all your gaming needs, from environment to gaming system.

You could just design an original setting with it and use your own favorite rules for everything else. You could translate your favorite setting into **ARIA** terms and roleplay its further evolution. You could design smaller parts of a setting that is already developed, like my plan to use **ARIA** to develop areas of **Middle Earth** that were left largely unexplained by professor Tolkien.

The roleplaying system is certainly better than a lot of others that are out there, so you could replace your old one with **ARIA.** And there are other uses (I'm sure) to which **ARIA** can and will be put. It's an all-purpose product!

Finally, there is **Myth**. This article began with a mention of myth and **ARIA**'s role in exploring it but didn't mention it much after that. Well, that's because exploring myth is largely a function of your mind-set.

It is certainly possible to explore mythic motifs with other game systems but **ARIA** takes some steps in the mythic direction that other games don't. First, **ARIA** culls the best of a group's collective imagination to create a living, personal setting. This environment is much more personal and involving because you've created it! Second, through *Narrative Histories* the group is able to explore grand themes. To really create tales that are epic, that become their own myths, I believe that a tale must begin to encompass the tapestry that is human life from birth-to-death and beyond through proceeding generations.

Players must experience the way their personas have affected their environment and get a feel for history unfolding. **ARIA** lets you do this. Through **ARIA** one can even experience the vibrant life of such impersonal and almost intangible things as societies and cultures. The scope of it all draws out some romantic, nostalgic, quixotic sensation in me in a way that even the best of campaigns hasn't done.

Joseph Campbell, in an interview with Bill Moyers, said "The great thing about adventures in space is that they are set in an area that are not covered by our own knowledges." Much of the adventure in the old stories is that they go into regions that no one has been in before. Well, we've now conquered the planet so there are no empty spaces for the imagination to go forth and fight its own war. Yet there remain those regions of our own devising and **ARIA** facilitates their creation. ❑

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# Up My Sleeve

## The World of Card Games

**Edited by David Williams**

First things first: in our special card games issue, in the "Head to Head" section, Jim reported an incorrect price for *Companion Games*' **Galactic Empires™** game. While this was apparently due to a miscommunication with a distributor, we want to apologize to Companion Games and report that the prices for Galactic Empires Primary Edition are $8.95 for a 55 card Starter Deck, and $2.45 for a 10 card booster pack. Things are good between SHADIS and Companion Games, and we are expecting to include a unique Galactic Empires card in issue #19. While we cannot release details about the card, it is rumored to have an ability unique to the G.E. world. Companion Games has announced a pair of $1,000 Galactic Empires tournaments at GenCon and Origins. In the second week of March, Companion is planning to release "New Empires", their first expansion set which includes 200 cards and 9 new entities from 4 new empires.

We are very excited this issue to preview two cards from **Magic: the Gathering's** next expansion set: **Ice Age™**. See Canticle's discourse on the uses of these two subtly powerful cards this issue. Ice Age is a "super expansion" the size of **Legends™** and if these two cards are any indication, then this will be an extremely useful set, indeed. From the looks of things, the artwork has stepped up another notch also, as all of the artwork that has been released to the public has been outstanding. Ice Age will be playable by itself, and also is completely playable/compatible with **Magic: the Gathering**. It will be sold in 60–card starter decks that will contain basic land, and 15–card booster packs that will not.

The werewolf card game from *White Wolf* seems to be gaining steam. **RAGE** is getting some exciting previews (including the one in this issue), and the announcement that the cards will be printed by Fleer (known for their Fleer Ultra line of high-quality sports cards) has raised eyebrows and expectations. Fast and furious combat combined with a multitude of card combos should make RAGE a quick hit when it releases May 12th.

*TSR* should be in stores now with their new card game **Blood Wars**. Blood Wars is based on their **Planescape** campaign setting where armies rise again and again to fight for power. Blood Wars was designed with a multi-player game in mind, but plays well as a two–player duel as well. Starter decks have been carefully designed to be playable by themselves, a problem with several of the new games. There are three escalation packs for Blood Wars already lined up: the first escalation packs are related and released with the basic game. Escalation pack 2 is Factols and Factions — a set releasing in June with many new legions. Pack three is Powers and Prophecies, involving the gods and their effects (the set will be weighted towards new fate cards). While the print run is still not public, TSR let slip that "Speculators will be pleased".

**Illuminati: New World Order** has been extremely popular for *Steve Jackson Games*. Based on his classic **Illuminati,** the card game has all of the twisted and hilarious groups and play of the original. Starter Decks of INWO have been especially popular as they're the only place to find Illuminati groups. INWO has faced a problem in that the winning conditions are too easily attained in the first two turns using the right deck. However, playing groups have gotten around this through house rules and Steve Jackson has announced that a "fix" is planned for the next release.

*Atlas Games* are releasing their first expansion for **On the Edge** called **The Cut-Ups Project**. Al Amarja is infiltrated by the bizarre (can this game get stranger?) Cut-Ups including sinister coffee and raining walrus. *Thunder Castle Games* finally has a firm date for the release of **Towers in Time™**. The promo cards for Towers will ship on March 17, and the first edition will ship on April 17th "God forbid that anything else goes wrong". **Highlander™** is still on schedule for an April release.

In the next few months, there are a number of new card games coming out: **Slasher™** from *Precedence Publishing* is a spoof of B-grade slasher movies. Slasher is best played by fairly warped individuals, but even straight-laced types will enjoy the game. There will be a special insert of the "Gratuitous Nudity" card in SHADIS Presents: Movies and T.V. (issue #18.5) next month.

**Ultimate Combat™** is coming out the end of march from *Ultimate Games*. Check out the preview by the game's designer later in the section. *Last Unicorn Games* is coming out with **Heresy: Kingdom Come™**, a game of angels, demons and humans battling in a dark future. This game looks to be a cross of cyberpunk and the Old Testament, and the artist lineup is really impressive including Michael Kaluta and James O'Barr. *Caliber Press* is releasing the card game **Power Cards™** based on their **Storm Quest™** comic books. This superhero slugfest releases in the end of March.

*Black Dragon Press* will enter the card game market with **Tempest of the Gods™** in which players struggle for power in a religious war. Aiming for a May release with about 300 cards, deities and their followers will erect shrines, convert worshipers, cause miracles, summon plagues, and open gates in an effort to summon their god or destroy their enemies. **Super Deck™** is doubling in size with Slim Deck Boosters from *Card Sharks, Inc. Daedalus Games* has announced a new game called **Shadowfist™** where players control an array of warriors from the past, present, and future fighting for control of mystical places of power.

Finally, new and old readers can check out our "List of Lists" showing where each checklist can be found. ❑

## Single Card Strategies
### *Norritt* and *Essence Flare*
by Jeff Scott Franzmann

Canticle stood by the door to his tower, watching as the cart made its way along the spongy trail, swaying dangerously from side to side. The mule looked as if it desired nothing more than to sink into the mire and be freed from its burden, but its master would have none of that, urging him forward. He sat upon the heap of boxes, bundles, containers and sacks which were stacked precariously in the cart, scratching at his scant beard with one hand, holding tight to the reins with the other. A wide-brimmed, pointed hat was perched upon his head, pulled low over his head.

"A fair day, Necromancer . . ."

"It's been years, Walker . . . several of them. I take it your journey was a profitable one?"

Walker laughed, and walked around the cart, tossing a few odds and ends into the muck beside the trail. Using both hands, he pulled a large cage out of the cart, covered with a ratty piece of canvas. A low, rumbling noise emerged from beneath the canvas.

"Profitable indeed. It's been too long, Canticle, and I think you'll be quite interested in what I have to show you. Relics and magicks from a time so many have forgotten. And survivors as well . . ."

Canticle raised an eyebrow in interest, as Walker removed the canvas from the cage with a flourish.

"Witness, Canticle, something unseen since the Ice Age. A . . ."

**Norritt!** A foul-tempered Imp of perverse nature, the Norritt may be summoned forth with the expenditure of 1 Black Mana in conjunction with 3 colorless. Though 1/1, Norritt possesses powers which make it a power indeed. Upon being tapped, it can untap any Blue creature it chooses. Alternatively, it may be tapped to force an opponent's non-wall creature to attack. If the creature for some reason cannot attack, it is then destroyed. A truly vicious ability indeed . . . a Nettling Imp, and more.

The powers of the Nettling Imp which Norritt possesses make it a formidable creature indeed. Forcing an opponent's creature to attack can be extremely useful in a variety of situations. Drawing a specific creature which is proving a distraction into the clutches of a Sengir Vampire or Infernal Medusa is particularily satisfying. When creatures such as the Combat Medic and Argivian Archaeologist simply sit back and utilize their powers, have Norritt invite them over for a little discussion.

The more devious uses of Norritt, however, lie within its ability to untap any Blue creature as long as it taps itself. The uses inherent in such an ability are numerous, and can actually be used in conjuction with its other power as well. Quite aside from the obvious, as in allowing the Prodigal Sorcerer to utilize its power twice in a turn, there are other, not so obvious uses as well.

Consider, first of all, using Sleight of Mind to allow Norritt to untap a creature of any colour. Such a power is useful whether it is used to untap your own Black Knight after an attack, or instead used to untap an opponent's Preacher to recover your stolen creature. Sleighting Norrit can also allow you to get double duty out of creatures such as the Dwarven Weaponsmith and Icatian Scout.

During an opponent's turn, you can utilize the power of Norritt to untap one of your own creatures for use in defence. Then, using Jandor's Saddlebags (or an equivalent spell), you can untap Norritt. At this point, you force your opponent to attack, and use the newly untapped creature to block. This works wonderfully on powerful, otherwise difficult to untap creatures such as the Leviathan. Not only do you not have to pay the untap cost, but the creature can pull double duty as both attacker and defender in one full round, courtesy of Norritt.

One particularily nasty way of taking advantage of Norritt's powers is as follows. During the opponent's turn, he forces a creature to attack. During your turn he untaps. You can then use his untapping power on Leviathan or a similar creature if you have Sleighted the Imp. Use the Saddlebags, and you can pull the same stunt over and over again.

Walker looked at the Necromancer, and winked.

"I wish I had more time . . . there is so much to learn about these creatures . . . and there is so much more I want to show you as well."

Canticle looked on in interest as Walker passed his hand over the cage which held Norritt, and listened to the tiny whines of the creature rise in volume. A sickly, crunching noise was heard, and the Imp began screaming in agony as joints and bones popped and snapped, growing in a manner truly unnatural. Walker looked up at the intrigued necromancer.

"Another remnant of the Ice Age, a piece of magick known as . . .

**Essence Flare!** A simple creature enchantment which costs 1 Blue, Essence Flare gives a +2/0 bonus to the afflicted creature, and forces the placement of a 0/-1 counter every upkeep of the creature's controller, a counter which remains even if the Enchantment is removed.

Essence Flare is probably best used prior to an attack, when the benefits of the +2 are not yet offset by the penalties of the decrease in toughness. Basically, you are given a one-turn grace period before the damage from the Flare begins to accumulate. However, there are many ways to turn this apparent disadvantage into an advantage, if one simply takes the time to look for them.

Once the attack is resolved, and the creature with Essence Flare no longer has use for the Enchantment, use Enchantment Alteration to pass the Flare onto an opposing creature, before the end of your turn. In this manner, you gain the benefits of the Flare, while your opponent immediately begins to suffer the side effects as well. In this manner, a Mage can garner the benefits of increased strength and kill an opposing creature for a total expenditure of 2 blue mana.

One of the more devious uses for the Essence Flare involves placing it upon a Rukh Egg. For three turns, you will have a 2/★ creature, and on the last turn, it will make for the graveyard, providing you with a 4/4 flying creature. While this tactic works with Unstable Mutation as well, Essence Flare has an advantage in that you are not losing any attacking strength over time, only toughness.

There are many who will argue that Essence Flare has more uses on an opponent's creatures than on one's own. Indeed, if you have an Enchanted Being, it may be a wise course of action to place the Flare on a creature which is proving to be particularily bothersome. The Flare will ensure that it can do no damage so long as you have the Being in play, and it will slowly but surely do away with the creature as well. Essence Flare can be particularily amusing when used on an opposing Wall. The +2 advantage is of little worth to something which cannot attack, and the 0/-1 counter is hardly any compensation.

The Elder Dragon, Nicol Bolas, was rumoured to employ Essence Flare in combination with a Meekstone. He would wait for an opponent's creatures to attack, perhaps drawing them over with a Norritt, and with the Flare make them

unable to untap while they slowly perished. Many creatures of Light and Nature fell to this strategy.

Walker placed the canvas over the cage as Norritt twitched and flopped in its death throes. The wandering peddler had never been known for his compassion.

"Interesting finds indeed . . ."

Walker nodded, and flashed a smile.

"And there is more to come, Necromancer . . . There is more to come. . . ." ❑

## Ultimate Combat!
By Dave Long

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a true master of the martial arts — with all the techniques of judo, karate, taekwondo, jujitsu, boxing and wrestling in your arsenal of attacks? This is the world of **Ultimate Combat!**, the new collectible trading card game of martial arts and combative sports fighting. Conceived by Dave Long, the Team Leader of the 1992 U.S. Olympic Judo Team, a 6° Black Belt with over 35 years experience in the world of martial arts, Ultimate Combat! lets you fight an unending series of ever changing, always challenging battles against your friends and training partners.

How real is Ultimate Combat!? Real enough to be licensed by the United States Taekwondo Union as the official card game of the U. S. Taekwondo Team . . . licensed by the United States Judo Association as the official card game of the U. S. Judo Association Team . . . and by USA Wrestling as an official card game of the U. S. Wrestling Team. These three national organizations have all picked Ultimate Combat! as their official card game, for its playability, its superb art, and its true-to-life depiction of real combative sports and martial arts.

Ultimate Combat! is a collectible trading card game where you can collect over 250 different cards depicting martial arts techniques and actions, ranked in power from white belt to brown belt, black belt and eventually the Master's gold belt. You can then pick and choose from your collection of cards to design a playing deck (generally of about 60 cards) that you think will have the best chance of victory. One of Ultimate Combat!'s strengths is that the balancing of decks is smoothly integrated with the feel of the game. Decks are designated as white belt,brown belt, black belt or master decks depending on the quantity of each level of card that they contain. In this way, it is possible to have a balanced game between a player with only a few cards and one who has thousands.

There are seven categories of cards in Ultimate Combat, each of which serves a specific purpose. The Foundations provide the base power from which all of the other cards can be played. Technique cards are the backbone of the game, and represent all of the strikes, holds, throws and blocks that your fighter can perform. Movement cards and Advantage cards can increase the power of your attacks and blocks. Talisman and armor cards provide your fighter with special powers and increased defenses. Action cards provide for mystical assaults and other actions.

With the addition of expansion sets such as "The Mystical Fighting Arts of China," expected in the summer of '95, Ultimate Combat! can prove to be an ever–expanding source of mental exercise and tactical training for martial artists and enthusiasts of all styles and levels. Ultimate Combat! will be printed by Upper Deck of San Diego, California, and is expected to be released on April 1. ❑

## A RAGE Preview
by D. J. Trindle

**RAGE**, coming in May from *White Wolf Game Studios*, seems to be at least as faithful to **Werewolf: the Apocalypse** as **Jyhad** was to **Vampire: the Masquerade**. You need at least two people to play, although multiplayer games make things more interesting. Each player has a pack of Garou (werewolves), all of whom have a Renown rating between one and ten. The Renown total of all players' werewolf packs are the same (you play a twenty-point, or forty-point, or fifteen-point game of RAGE, depending on how long you want the game to run); this Renown total is also the victory condition. The first player to defeat enemies totaling that amount of Renown wins.

There are two decks of cards next to your Garou — an "action" deck (filled with allies, enemies, and various events, moots, and sneaky things), and a "combat" deck. All players draw up to five cards from both decks at the beginning of a turn (combat cards also refresh after combat), and then play is simultaneous. Everybody plays allies (next to their Garou) and enemies (to the center of the board), then moots are called (where politics temporarily takes precedence), and then when combat rolls around later in the turn, the alphas representing each pack may attack enemies or other werewolves. Since any opposing player may end up playing combat cards for the enemy in question, it is often safer to attack another Garou. This game mechanic ensures that the Garou often spend more time and energy fighting other packs rather than common enemies — a situation not uncommon in **Werewolf: the Apocalypse**.

Game play is rapid — a bunch of us, going in absolutely cold and playing prebuilt decks and packs, took from 35 to 90 minutes to finish our respective four–player games. It's not a difficult game to pick up, but there is significant card interaction and strategy, much like the other good CCG's on the market. ❑

## The Conquering Continues
by David Williams

### Optional Rule:

**Big and Bad:** Rather than the inverse relationship between a creature's power and it's movement points, players fond of big creatures may play with the following variant: creatures have movement points equal to their power at the beginning of movement (creatures still are allowed to move at least one space each turn). All other movement rules stay the same.

### Tournament Rules:

When running a tournament of The Conquering, it is recommended that players provide their own pieces and counters. It will probably be necessary for the tournament director to have enough maps, but it is likely that there will be a couple of boards between the players, and the players who have boards should get automatic entrance into the tournament.

Place the players randomly at the starting positions on the boards that are available. If it is possible, I suggest running with four people to a board. A four person game is not too crowded, but still makes players fight for elbow room.

If time is a problem for a tournament, I suggest the following format for each round: Set a time limit such as two hours for each round (this *should* be enough for a group of four players who have played The Conquering before. With new players or a six player game, expect the rounds to take longer). You will need to decide whether ties will be broken by "lives remaining" or "Places of Power visited". I recommend the latter, as it encourages a more free-flowing game where movement

is as important as combat. With 30 minutes to go, begin enforcing a two-minute time limit on player turns (perhaps 3 or 4 with novice players). When the time limit expires, use the tie-breaking scheme chosen to see who advances if no winner has emerged from a certain group.

While it is simplest to simply have the winner of each table advance to the next round, another possiblity is to allow the top two finishers advance — either the top two places when time expires or the winner and top finisher amongst the others. This method provides for a slightly less cut-throat game, but may result in players working together.

I recommend using the current Duelist's Convocation rules for deckbuilding (whether to run type 1, 2 or 3 is up to the director), as well as limiting the Jayemdae Tome and Ring of Renewal to one per deck. This will generally keep the game on a level playing field amongst the big-money players and the new players. ❑

## The List of Lists

Collect 'em all!

Many readers have asked us for a guide to our many card lists which we've been printing for over a year. Here it is!

Dixie: Issue 17.5
DoomTrooper: Issue 16
Flights of Fantasy: Issue 18
Galactic Empires: Issue 16
Illuminati N.W.O.: Issue 17.5
Jyhad: Issue 15
Magic: Issues 10, 13
- Arabian Nights – Issue 13
- Antiquities – Issue 13
- Legends – Issue 14
- The Dark – Issue 15
- Fallen Empires – Issue 17

Spellfire:
- Ravenloft – Issue 16

Star of the Guardians: Issue 17.5
Star Trek CCG: Issue 17
Towers in Time: Issue 16
Wyvern: Issue 17.5 ❑

SHADIS

# Flights of Fantasy

A Checklist for Ed Beard's Collectible Fantasy Art Card Game.

### Sci-Fi

❑ C Acheron 3010
❑ C Agromex
❑ C Alpha-z
❑ C Anguian
❑ C Cephalodine
❑ U Damaylia
❑ U Dotrene
❑ C Dr.M.E. Phistopheles
❑ C Dryxtar
❑ C Enciadus
❑ C Gorgon
❑ C Grotts
❑ U Isogoniks
❑ C Kakahn
❑ U Keitsektok
❑ U Kestrelin
❑ C Komodo
❑ C Kryophoros
❑ C Lunar Worm
❑ C M-6 Annihilator
❑ C M-6 Sentry
❑ C Medepoch
❑ U Mithraic
❑ C Ocxolytes
❑ C Power Incarnate
❑ C Rodeka
❑ C Sarka
❑ C Scalovates
❑ C Slade
❑ C Walker

### Fantasy

❑ U Andnc
❑ U Artimdos
❑ C Bohg
❑ C Castor
❑ C Chacmagyes
❑ C Crylys
❑ C Cryos
❑ C Demons
❑ C Drogah
❑ C Druid Priests
❑ C Ergloph
❑ C General Lgeron
❑ C Guardian of Universe
❑ C Khnemu
❑ C King Ogdin Loven
❑ C Krystalin
❑ C Lostomatid
❑ C Megohm
❑ U Nyctea
❑ C Ogress
❑ C Pollux
❑ C Racniz
❑ C Rakshasa
❑ C Saji
❑ U Saurian
❑ U Scutisorex
❑ C Stone Guardian
❑ C Terrasesis
❑ C Urutu
❑ C Virago

### Horror

❑ C Ace Fighter
❑ C Alexandrian
❑ U Arch Angel
❑ C Cat Beast
❑ U Chansi
❑ C Clive Shulte
❑ C Crows
❑ U Father Tonoff
❑ C Forest
❑ C Friar Matthew
❑ C Ganesa
❑ U Gargoyle
❑ C Grave Diggers
❑ C Jester
❑ U Leo LeGrande
❑ C Madame Marishka
❑ C Mirror
❑ C Nazi Soldier
❑ C Nosferatu
❑ C Pycesus
❑ U Pyro Revolt
❑ C Sacred Relic
❑ U Scarecrow
❑ C Shaman
❑ C Teufel
❑ C Volcano
❑ C Vulture
❑ C Walking Dead
❑ C White Dove
❑ U Wolf

### Enhancement Cards

❑ R Knight Specter
❑ R Teufel
❑ R Flights of Fantasy Wizard

### Rule Cards

❑ R Rule Card A
❑ R Rule Card B
❑ R Rule Card C

### Puzzle Cards

❑ R Quark Dragoness
❑ R Neutron Dragoness
❑ R Tri-lateral Texangular
❑ R Radiation Dragoness
❑ R Scintillating Dragoness
❑ R Solar Dragoness
❑ R Ether Dragoness
❑ R Moon Dragoness
❑ R Dragon Automaton

### Gallery Cards

❑ VR Alien Billiards
❑ VR Artist Bio
❑ VR Cosmic Cleansing, The
❑ VR "FoF" Collage
❑ VR Geisha
❑ VR Harvest, The
❑ VR Kelly D. G. Beard
❑ VR Mind Control Beast
❑ VR Pollux Sculpture
❑ VR Social Gathering, The
❑ VR Swan, The
❑ VR Winter Play

### Autograph Cards

❑ UR Artist
❑ UR Writer

C = common
U = uncommon
R = rare
VR = very rare
UR = ultra-rare

# STAR OF THE GUARDIANS™

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## A Dragon Primer
**By Robert Morss**

You've peeled off the outer and inner wrapping of plastic and you've gotten that first whiff of the brand new collectible card game: **WYVERN™**. Ahh . . . sixty glorious cards (of which two are rare and thirteen uncommon) . . . beautiful artwork! Let's see . . . Dragons . . . treasure . . . actions . . . and what's this? A rule book? Oh yeah, you can play a game with these things, too!

First let's look at the typical WYVERN™ starter deck. WYVERN™ starter decks generally have about 25 dragon and terrain cards, and 35 action and treasure cards. Using the minimum deck requirements from page 7 of the rules (i.e. 15 dragon and terrain, 35 treasure and action), it is possible to play the game with one starter deck per player.

Since you only need 15 dragon and terrain cards in your dragon lair draw pile, and your starter provides you with 25 (or so), study your dragons and terrain to see if there are any you might want to leave out. Even with the minimum of 15 cards in your Dragon Lair, it is rare that you will run out of cards when playing the game with Starter Decks. This allows a certain latitude for different strategies when stocking your Dragon Lair Draw Pile, depending on the make up of your Treasure Horde Pile (over which you will have little or no control when using only a starter deck).

Some players don't see the need to put *any* terrain in their Dragon Lair. But you will find that without those few extra Gold pieces generated during the course of a game when your opponent's Dragons discover your terrain, you will be short of gold when the final battles are being fought. When you're left holding a bunch of Battle Actions that you can't afford, it can be very frustrating. Even worse is when you're unable to pay one of your Dragons to fight! He just runs away (is discarded). Sure, the down side to terrain is that one of your opponent's Scouts might remove it, but to do so he must reveal himself. Once revealed, a Scout is usually easy prey to a counterattack or to a Dragon Slayer.

Dragons: they come in various shapes and sizes, generally ranging from zero to seven in basic strength; some are fliers, some are Scouts, some have special abilities. A combination of strengths and abilities is recommended when building your Dragon Lair.

Scouts are weak, but necessary; without them your opponent will gain Gold back almost as fast as he or she spends it (as your non-Scouts uncover enemy Terrain cards). Result: you will be left with a bunch of weakened Dragons, and not enough Gold to compete in the end game. Many players like to use a Flying Scout (such as Ampitere) from the back row, since it is less vulnerable to a counter attack there.

Your largest Dragons should be held back and wait to attack an opposing face up Dragon, when you feel you have a good chance of winning the battle. In fact, don't pay a large Dragon to enter the game unless you are forced to (when an enemy Dragon attacks it while face down) or you need him to fight a battle you are fairly certain you can win. These Dragons are expensive to pay for, so you should know what you're getting into before sending one into battle. One battle combination quickly discovered by playtesters is to use a big Dragon to back up a small one. That is, attack with the small Dragon — once battle is joined, use the Battle Action card *help* to bring the big Dragon in as a reinforcement. Beware of this tactic, though . . . every Dragon that fights in a losing battle is killed! One misplayed Battle Chaos Card (which allows each player to bring as many Dragons as they want into the battle) could cost you the game.

The smaller Dragons that are not Scouts may seem, at first, to be of limited use. After all, since they don't remove Terrain why not just load up your Dragon Lair with big Dragons and throw in a few Scouts for good measure? But don't give up on the inexpensive, smaller Dragons. They can be used quite effectively in combination with Battle Action cards that carry strength modifiers. When using low-cost Dragons, you don't have the high up front cost when they are first turned up. Moreover, they can often defeat an opposing Scout on their own (i.e. without using Battle Action cards). And if one gets caught in a battle with a large Dragon, you can apply your strength–modifying Battle Actions on an "as needed" basis. Highly useful with this strategy is to have the complimentary Treasures, Sword (+1 when attacking) and Jewels (+1 when attacking) in your front row Treasure positions.

As mentioned previously, the makeup of your Dragon Lair will be influenced by what you have in your Treasure Horde. Besides those mentioned above, here are a few useful combinations to be aware of:

Some Dragons (such as Ajatar and Naga) are stronger (make that much stronger) when attacking from face down. When combined with the ability to be turned back face down (see treasure card Cauldron, or action card Avalanche), these Dragons can seem almost invincible. Face down Dragons also cannot be attacked by Dragon Slayers.

The Treasure card Magic Wand should be used in a back row Treasure position. Particularly in the early stages of the game, it is nice to be able to make any Dragon in your back row a flier. Do this in your first Action phase and then sortie in your Battle Phase to attack or scout your opponent's front row. The advantage is that in the back row you are less vulnerable to counter attack.

A good way to get more than one card per turn into your hand is to play the Avalanche and Tsunami Action card combination. Say you have three Dragons face up. The Avalanche turns all Face up Dragons face down. Follow this with a Tsunami Actions Card which allows you to draw one card from your Treasure Horde for each Dragon you turn face up: turn up the three Dragons just turned face down by the Avalanche (which will cost you no Gold as you already paid for them when they were first turned up), and draw three cards from your Treasure Horde to your hand. This combo becomes even more useful if you know what cards you are about to draw! Play a Crystal Ball Action card on yourself, which allows you to look at the next five cards in your Treasure Horde Draw Pile and place them back in any order you want.

Early in the game, when most of your battlefield positions are still occupied, an Avalanche followed by a Twister (which allows both players to rearrange all cards in their battlefields) can inject a degree of uncertainty back into the situation.

Now that you've got some idea of what to look for in card combinations, you should be able to put together a competitive playing deck, even from just one WYVERN™ starter.

U.S. Games Systems has announced a new WYVERN Customer Support Number: (203) 327-4272 and is covered from 1 to 4 pm Eastern Time with voice mail if no one is in. ❑

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# Cardiology

**Written by Katherine Shelly Pfeiffer**

In my introductory column I spent considerable space discussing the merits of my favorite fantasy art trading card sets. With this first regular column I will begin shorter reviews. Each month I'll try to cover the newest fantasy releases as well as discuss some of the excellent sets still available from past releases.

**Joe Jusko's Edgar Rice Burroughs Collection**
**Publisher: FPG ◆ Artwork: A ◆ Production Values: A+**
**Cards in Set: 60 ◆ Approx. price $15**

The hottest fantasy art trading card set released in December was Joe Jusko's **Edgar Rice Burroughs Collection** from *FPG*. This set stands out for both artwork and production values.

The physical quality of these cards represent a new high point in trading cards. You'll be struck by the thickness of the cards; they remind me of credit cards. These 60 cards are the first in a series of FPG Gold series cards printed on 24pt card stock with UV and aqueous coatings on both sides. The quality of the color reproduction of artwork on both sides is the finest I have seen.

The paintings offer a wide range of dramatic scenes from the many Burroughs works. Jusko has a good feel for the human figure, and my favorites are those in which it dominates. His scenes showing Tarzan and lions from *Tarzan and The Apes* and *Tarzan and the Golden Lion* capture the muscular and heroic aspects of Tarzan and the majesty of the his great cat companions. Scantily clad beauties in seductive poses and perilous situations reveal Jusko a master of the charms of the "weaker" sex, as well. For those who want action, many scenes depict ferocious conflicts between man and man and man and beast. Jusko's lions, leopards, elephants, crocodiles, apes, vultures, and dinosaurs stand out in these paintings for their vitality, reality and animation. Throughout the set Jusko's paintings uniformly reflect the thespian visual qualities of Edgar Rice Burroughs's stories. The paintings depict scenes from all the Tarzan stories, as well as Pellucidar, The Lost Continent, The Cave Girl, At The Earth's Core, The Land Time Forgot, The Moon Maid, and Beyond the Farthest Star. And the six chase cards make up a spectacular metallic "sixtych" from John Carter of Mars — the best metallic card set I've seen.

Born exactly 84 years after Edgar Rice Burroughs, Joe Jusko enjoyed copying cartoons even as a young boy. After he graduated from New York High School of Art and Design in 1977 with the D.C. Comics Award for Excellence in Cartooning, he apprenticed with Howard Chaykin, a noted comic artist. Jusko worked as a comic illustrator and soon found that he craved the more challenging work of painting. He was soon producing painted covers for Heavy Metal and Marvel's magazines. In 1992, Marvel hired him to produce the 104 paintings for the first Marvel Masterpieces set. That set was a tremendous hit. Unlike the Marvel series, which he had to complete in $3\text{–}1/2$ months, Jusko worked for over a year and a half on the 61 images used in the Burroughs set.

## Bigger Is Better

New on the collecting card scene are large format cards from both *Comic Images* and *FPG*. In the case of artwork, there is no doubt that bigger is better: you can see the beautiful details in paintings without a magnifying glass.

**Keepsake Collections**
**Publisher: Comic Images**

Comic Images Keepsake cards were published in mid–1994. Two sets will interest fantasy lovers, the **Tim Hildebrandt: The World's Dragons** Keepsake Collection and the **Michael Whelan Elric** Keepsake Collection. Both come with six comic book size, 6" x 9", images and a 6" x 9" mini press sheet reproducing all six cards in trading card size. The Hildebrandt set comes with a holochrome card with another dragon scene. The dragon scenes show dragons in a variety of settings and with a variety of characters. The Elric set reproduces the well–loved Moorcock book covers. Here we see Whelan's romantic and compelling visualization of the albino warrior-wizard. Keepsake collections are printed on standard card stock, and come packaged together in a windowed envelope printed with the title of the set. No printing on the back sides. $19.99 per set. Each Keepsake Collection is limited to 5000 sets.

**Colossal Cards**
**Publisher: FPG ◆ Artwork: A ◆ Production Quality: A+**
**Cards in Set: 50 ◆ Approx. price $100**

As FPG says, these are "gigantic" trading cards. Like regular trading cards, Colossal Cards are sold in packs of five cards, eighteen packs per box. These $6\text{–}3/4$" x 10" cards are printed in the highest quality reproduction on 24pt card stock. The set includes 50 different images, five each by Chris Achilleos, Larry Elmore, Richard Hescox, Jeffrey Jones, Ken Kelly, Don Maitz, Keith Parkinson, Mike Ploog, Rowena, and Darrell Sweet. New text on the back of the cards gives more information on the works of art and the artists. These cards are already somewhat scarce and a complete set will cost a bundle, but they're beautiful. FPG plans another set later this year.

If you need help finding any of the trading card sets mentioned in this column, please call Bob Irsik at Comics Utah, 800–927–5075.

I'd be most grateful for your questions and comments about the items in this column. You can write to me care of SHADIS or e-mail me at CompuServe ID 71151,252. ❑

# Zine Scene™

## A Closer Look at the Small Press World

**Edited by Mitch Michaelson**

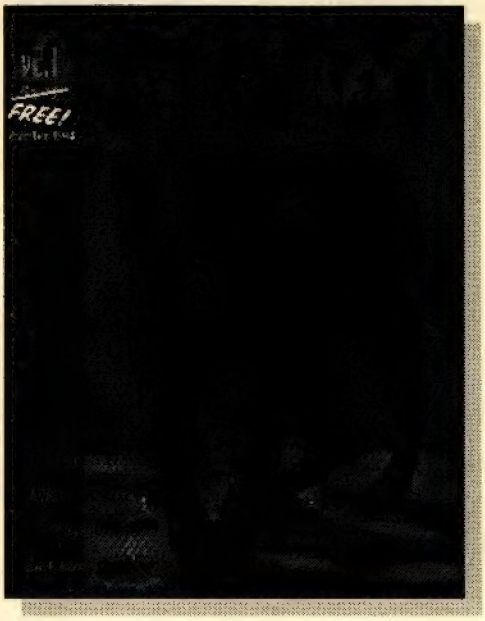
As I commented last issue, the small press world is a bit more active than normal. Several publishers have created the **Small Press Association** to "provide a forum for members to exchange ideas, provide mutual support and assistance, and promote small press and the role-playing hobby."

The SPA seems targeted at small companies or people about to start companies. From talking with the developers, I think what we're seeing is not so much competition for GAMA, but an effort to focus some of the energy of the small press world on the issues of small press. The advice and experience of start-up companies in this hobby would be a great boon to beginners.

Contact the Small Press Association at P.O. Box 2531, Elk Grove, CA 95759.

### Tip of the Month

Zines fall behind schedule at one time or another. Accepting that means you're forewarned and forearmed. Stockpiling articles and art is the key to a quick recovery. When you find yourself with many articles, set a few aside for the day when you'll need them. If you get your hands on a talented artist who can produce large numbers of illustrations, try to get a bit more than you need, so that later you don't find yourself lacking art.




### The Familiar

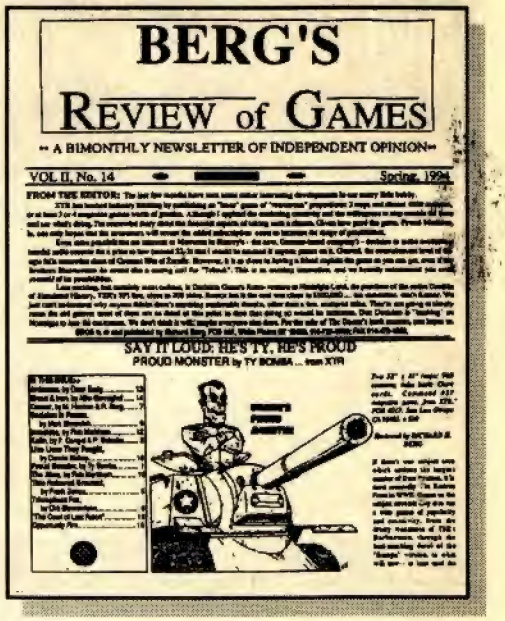
Publisher: The Familiar, LTD
Editor: Edmund Shaw
Frequency: Monthly

The newest entry to roleplaying magazines is also one of the oldest — sort of. **The Familiar** existed long ago, back in the 80s. Now it has returned in full color. **The Familiar's** first two issues will be free, so look around at conventions or your local game store for copies.

To describe its focus, I'll use the publisher's words: "...our focus is going to be on worlds and not rules." In addition, they hope to bring to a big magazine what the fanzines have always had: reader interaction. They already have the direct involvement of fanzine editors and advice from other editors. In addition, they're supporting the Small Press Association.

But that's policy, so let me tell you what's in their first issue. They touch on industry news by describing the TSR v. GDW lawsuit (regarding Gygax's game Dangerous Journeys). There's an article by Spike Y. Jones on what people have historically used for money rather than gold. Best, we get a descriptive article on a science fiction world called Yagahina. I liked Yagahina very much, and would have printed it myself had I gotten it first. Much of the rest of the first issue is filled with the 18 RPG reviews.

Everybody that knows the **Familiar** folks hope they hit their stride and climb in popularity. Maybe you can help by writing to: The Familiar, PO Box 2752, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2752.


BERG'S
REVIEW of GAMES
** A BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF INDEPENDENT OPINION **
VOL II, No. 14 Spring, 1994
FROM THE EDITOR:
SAY IT LOUD: HE'S TY, HE'S PROUD
PROUD MONSTER by TY BOMBA ... from XYR

### Berg's Review of Games

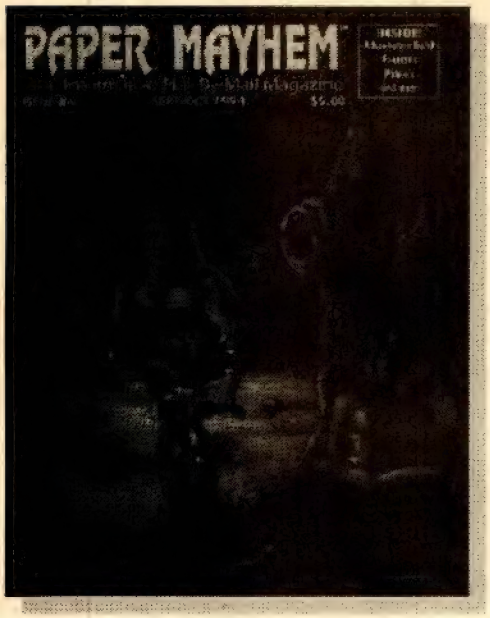
Publisher: Richard Berg
Editor: Richard Berg
Frequency: Bimonthly

**Berg's Review Of Games** has won *Best Amateur Magazine* at *Origins* twice, but it isn't a pretty zine. The reason why it won is because the writing is very good, bordering on the best in fanzines. In fact, in the words of Richard Berg, it's "the best writing in the wargaming industry — a triumph of substance over style." Volume 1 of **BROG** was done in his days at SPI, about 10-15 years ago. The current incarnation began about three years ago.

The header reads: *"A Bimonthly Newsletter of Independent Opinion."* **BROG** prints reviews of historical wargames. They state who designed the game, what size the maps are, how many counters it has, and how much it costs, among other things. They also include Capsule Comments for a quick summation.

The reviews stuck in my memory, unlike the ones I often read on roleplaying games. Who can forget referring to players as "Dice Potatoes" or a game as "butt-numbing?" One reviewer, remarking on the number of dice rolled in a game, wrote, "You will be able to crush a Volkswagen after playing this game twice."

**BROG** is photocopied on regular white paper and stapled. The average page length is about 15 pages. If you enjoy historical wargames, you should subscribe to Berg's Review of Games. Contact Richard at: PO Box 567, White Plains, NY 10602.




## Paper Mayhem

Publisher: Paper Mayhem Assoc.
Editor: David Webber
Frequency: Bimonthly

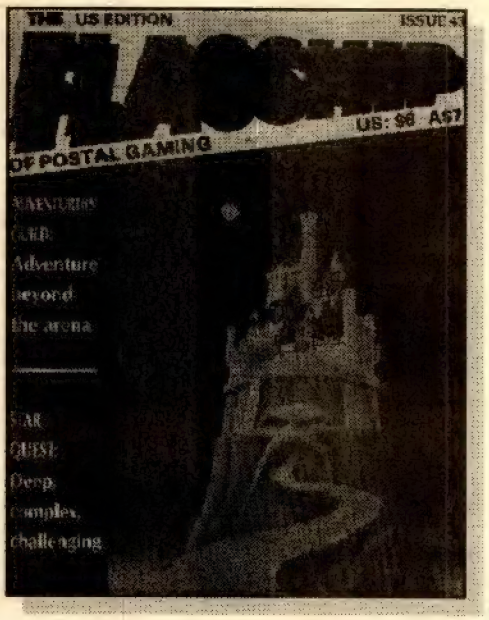
**Paper Mayhem** is one of the finest publications in all of adventure gaming. The reason why you may not know about it is **Paper Mayhem** covers play-by-mail games. If you have the slightest interest in PBM games, you should subscribe to **Paper Mayhem** immediately.

What's good about **Paper Mayhem?** The articles are informative and the research is trustworthy. It has excellent, full-color covers - the most recent by Magic artist Né Né. It comes out regularly and has been for 11 years. Unlike many roleplaying magazines, it's neutral and unbiased.

**Paper Mayhem** is the perfect place to find out about PBMs. In the most recent issue, they included the PBM Game Ratings, a list of over 70 games. They also had the year-end Best PBM Games of 1994, Best PBM Moderators of 1994, and Best PBM Companies of 1994.

As someone who desperately wants to get into PBM gaming but doesn't have the time, I almost don't like to get Paper Mayhem. It's more frustrating than flipping through Victoria's Secret. (Not that I do. Really.) The games look enticing and there's a lot going on in that part of the hobby, especially as games begin to move to play-by-electronic-mail.

Get Paper Mayhem to find out more: Paper Mayhem, Dept. PM, 1518 Adams Street, Ottawa, IL 61350-4770.




## Flagship

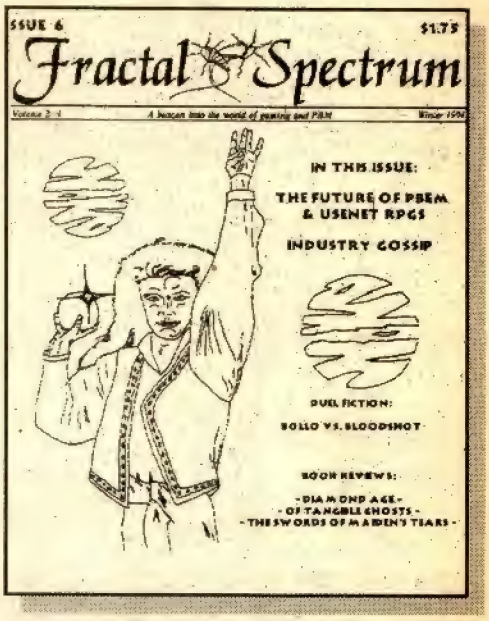
Publisher: Baker Bond, LTD
US Editor: Joey Browning
Frequency: Bimonthly

**Flagship** is often compared to **Paper Mayhem**, since they're the two leading PBM magazines. Both seem friendly with one another though, even cross-advertising. Flagship started in Britain, but has a US Edition now.

**Flagship** is heavy on data. The reviews include turn results and maps so you can see what games look like. They show you some of the game "languages" used to input orders to the game. For me, this is useful so that I can judge what kind of game I would be getting into. The reviews also include "At a Glance" notes so that you can decide if you even want to read the review. The back few pages include Galactic View, a database of companies and games printed in a tiny font.

Unlike most magazines, **Flagship** has a lot of input from readers. **Flagship** also has something called "Supercoupons." From what I gather, subscribers get discounts for starting up in games that accept Supercoupons.

You should get **Flagship** if you're interested in PBM games, especially electronic ones. It seems more detailed and less "pretty" than other magazines, but it's also more useful. Write to them at: RR 2 Box 40, Red Oak Flats, Dahlonega, GA 30533-9619.




## Fractal Spectrum

Publisher: Fractal Dimensions
Editor: Donald JA Redick
& Kathleen D. Seymour
Frequency: Quarterly

**Fractal Spectrum** is a small fanzine from the PBM company *Fractal Dimensions*. I like the zine quite a bit, but maybe that's because of my interests. It covers a bit of PBM and a bunch of RPG industry news. They also include two reviews per issue, convention lists, and some very short fiction. Mixed in, they even explain how to use the Internet to get involved with other gaming activities. Obviously, it's a well rounded little zine.

While they don't write new material for roleplaying games like spell lists or new character classes, their industry news column is worth catching. They always reveal major squabbles and product release dates, plus they print award winners and tell us who the FBI raided. Their industry news also involves PBM companies, so I can keep an eye on them, too. (The reason why I try to watch all of these columns in different zines is to get opposing views.)

The material for PBM is almost always for their own succesful game, "**A Duel of a Different Color**."

Fractal Spectrum has risen from eight 8.5" by 11" stapled pages to about 20 saddle-stitched pages at 7" by 8.5". Contact them at 17-29 Main Street, Suite 316, Cortland, NY 13045. ❑

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# Bits n' Pieces

## Rumors, New Products, Etc.

By Mark Arsenault

**Editor's Note:** As I was putting the finishing touches to this issue a friend called to tell me that Nigel Findley had just passed away. I was stunned, because I had just talked to Nigel (for the first time) on the telephone just a day or so prior.

I barely knew Nigel, except by reputation and through his many works. Nigel had agreed to write a fictional piece for our upcoming anthology special and I was both flattered and excited that he had agreed to do so. Nigel wrote over a hundred books related to the gaming and has worked in some capacity with virtually every game company in the business. I found the following bio on Nigel in the OGF on America Online and thought it would be of interest to our readers:

"Nigel Derek Findley passed away suddenly on February 19, 1995, at his home in Vancouver. He is survived by his loving partner Holly Langland and his adoring family: Mother Audrey, and brother Rodney.

He was predeceased by his father Garland in 1967 and his grandmother Dorothy MacLachlan in 1992. Nigel was born in Venezuela in 1959 and grew up in Spain, Nigeria, the United States and England before his family moved to Vancouver in 1969. He was educated in England and at St. George's School in Vancouver. He received his BSc and BFA degrees from the University of British Columbia where he was an active member of the Sigma Chi fraternity. In 1990, after brief careers in technical writing and marketing, he decided to pursue his true love, writing, as a full-time occupation. The literary legacy Nigel leaves behind him is great. Over the past 15 years Nigel has written over 100 books, including 12 novels, making him one of the most recognized names in the science fiction and gaming community.

In addition, for the past 6 years, Nigel wrote for High Tech Office column for the newspaper Business in Vancouver. His quick wit, inquiring mind, unique turn-of-phrase and enthusiasm for life will be sorely missed by his family, his friends, his colleagues, and his readers all over the world. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the charity of your choice."

Jolly R. Blackburn

### A New Ahearn Among Us

Congratulations to the Ahearn family on the birth of their baby boy, Luke Cooper Ahearn. Little Luke (aka Cooper) was born December 3rd, 1994, at 2:12 a.m. I'm told that mom only had to endure 45 minutes of labor, seven contractions and no drugs! "She smiled the whole time," Luke told me, "but after four years of marriage...she could handle anything."

Luke Cooper was 21 inches long and and weighed in at 7 lbs. 14 oz. At last — an heir to the *Goldtree Enterprises* legacy!

### Small Press Association Launches

A brand new organization was launched in January, designed to assist small press publishers of various role-playing products, including fanzines, magazines, game books, software and the like. **The Small Press Association** is headed by industry personalities Luke Ahearn (*Goldtree Enterprises*), Mark Arsenault (*Gold Rush Games*), Jolly Blackburn (*SHADIS*), Roger Carden (*The Familiar*) and Christian Moore (*Last Unicorn Games*).

The *Small Press Association* offers a "small press start-up kit" to new members, which includes an informative pamphlet, blank forms for obtaining an ISSN or ISBN, registering a copyright, and more. Members will also receive **Press On!**, the SPA's quarterly newsletter. Other materials, to be announced later, will also be made available to the general membership.

For a copy of the **Small Press Association** guidelines, just send a SASE to: SPA, P.O. Box 2531, Elk Grove CA 95759. AOL members may download the guidelines from the Game Company Support Library.

### Life After DC?

When asked about the possibility of re-releasing the **DC Heroes** game, Doug Tabb at Mayfair Games recently said, "We have no plans for the forseeable future to reacquire the (DC) license. The game system belongs to us, but we currently have no plans in the works to re-release it any time soon."

Doug, however, went on to say, "Keep an eye out, though...it'll be around again — someday."

### Wintertree Update

*Wintertree Software* announced the release of version 2.0 of **TableMaster**, their universal table-handling software for IBM compatible computers. The new version incorporates many advanced features, allowing users to create more flexible and powerful tabeles. Licensed table packages for several game systems will be available soon.

In addition, Wintertree owner Jean McGuire says that she is finalizing arrangements with a company "long absent from the RPG scene, whose return will be welcome."

For more information, you netrunners out there can contact Wintertree at: 73223.664@compuserve.com.

### Kingdom in a Box

*Kenzer & Company* recently announced that their **Kingdoms of Kalamar** fantasy game setting is now available in a boxed set. For more information on this original fantasy setting product, contact Kenzer & Company, 8926 N. Greenwood Ave. Suite 188, Niles IL 60714-5163.

### Don't Bug Me

Watch for a brand new board game from the folks at *Fat Messiah Games*, called **Insecta.** It reportedly deals with insectoid carnage on a tactical scale, with buggy warriors devouring each other...

The game doesn't take place on an alien world, as one might expect, but our very own! Just what the doctor ordered! Get your insecticide ready. Insecta is scheduled for release March first.

### Pariah Goes Fantasy

Mike Nystul, the self-titled *Cruise Director* of *Pariah Press*, announced that his company will be releasing **Crusade**, a new heroic fantasy game, later this year. "There will be a preview edition available at GenCon," Mike told me, "and unlike the Vault, you will only have to wait until Christmas for the real thing." For more information, you can e-mail Mike Nystul at: PariahMike@aol.com.

### Soldiers and Steins

*Soldiers and Swords Games* has entered the general merchandising arena with a new line of personalized, engraved pewter promotional items.

Everything from coffee mugs to zombie glasses can bear your custom logo, monogram or personal message. For more information, contact Soldiers and Swords Games at: 40

Jarvis St., Binghampton, NY 13905; or e-mail: SSGJeff@aol.com.

**Fourth Generation Quest**

It seems that **RuneQuest** will indeed see a 4th edition. "We'd like to release RQ4 at GenCon, but are not able to make any promises," said an *Avalon Hill Game Company* rep. "It will most likely be coming out as two books; the first called **RuneQuest**, the new edition of the Runequest rules, the second called **Adventures in Glorantha**, consisting of background, character generation and other Gloranthan-specific material."

**Black Dragon Scales, er, Cards**

*Black Dragon Press* recently announced the production of a brand new (you guessed it) collectible card game, called **Tempest of the Gods**.

The card set will be a limited run with 300 cards in the set. The cards will feature talented artists, including Jeff Menges, Mark Poole and Susan Van Camp, all of **Magic: the Gathering** fame.

**Brass Dragon Takes Flight**

*Brass Dragon Games* is now on decent footing. So says BD rep Richard McCoy.

"Our initial PBM game, **Conquest**, has two full sections running, with a third planned for March," Rich told me.

"We also have plans to release a new PBM game called **Space Station Omega** around March. Two other games are in the design stage." Richard told me that Brass Dragon also plans to break into the role-playing side of gaming sometime in the future.

You can contact Brass Dragon Games at: Apt. #204M, 251 S. Reynolds St., Alexandria VA 22304.

**Terror is Never Far Behind...**

That's the tag line of **Don't Look Back**, the first release from *Mind Ventures*.

**Don't Look Back: Terror is Never Far Behind** is a roleplaying game of horror, intrigue and science fiction set in an eerie modern world.

**Don't Look Back** is available now, with two supplements expected to be released later this year. For more information contact Mind Ventures at: P.O. Box 1032, Starkville, MS 39759; or e-mail them at: mventure@io.com.

**Travelling Band**

Another newcomer to the gaming scene is *Travell Games*, a game publishing company based in Columbia Falls, Montana.

For information about Travell Games and their (upcoming?) products, contact Travis Dorsey at: Travell Games, P.O. Box 1869, Columbia Falls, MT 59912.

**Take it to the Max!**

Yet another new game company to join the growing band of insomniacs in this industry is *Worldmaster Designs*, whose first work of love is **Adventure Maximum**.

Although WD has been around for a several months, I wanted to be sure to mention them in this column. **Adventure Maximum** is a universal role-playing system of high action and adventure, with 160 pages of material.

The game retails for $15 and can be ordered direct from Worldmaster Designs at: P.O. Box 5782, Enid, OK 73703. Also available from WD is *Gaming Maximum*, a zine dedicated to their RPG, and the **Adventure Maximum Game Screen**.

**Can it be Crunchy Frog?**

That was my reaction when I first laid eyes on *Crunchy Frog's* latest release, **Critter-Tek.** This item is a parody of *FASA's* popular **BattleTech** game.

**Critter-Tek** is a sharp-looking product, and has received a nod from the FASA crew. "Or at least they said they wouldn't sue!" said Crunchy Frog president Paul Lidberg. For more information, contact Crunchy Frog Ent. at: 889 Mowry Ave. #105, Fremont, CA 94536; or e-mail FrogGod@aol.com.

**If Ever a Wiz, a Wiz There Was..**

Look for **Wiz War Expansion #2** to be released this spring from *Chessex Games*, so says Joe Coleman. "A new resource for **Albedo** is in the works for ship construction," said Joe, "and there are rumors of a world guidebook to follow." Joe tells us there's nothing new for **Jorune** on schedule at this time.

**Harpoon Fires Again!**

Loren K. Wiseman, GDW president, has confirmed that there will be a new edition of **Harpoon** being released sometime in the unpecified future.

When asked when it might see the light of day, Loren said, "Shortly after Larry Bond finishes writing it." That's all we know at this point, sports fans.

**Black Inc.**

*Black Gate Publishing* underwent a transformation of sorts last month. Effective January 1st, the company is now called Black Gate Publishing, Incorporated (or "Inc." for those conserving printer toner).

"Don't worry," said BGP's Brandon Blackmoor, "it's just a tax thing. We're still a game company run by game players. The accountants and lawyers work for us, not the other way around."

**SW Ships Launches in September**

*West End Games*, after announcing several delays in the **Star Wars Ships** project, has given a tentative release date of September. The project is currently being written by Steve Luminati, and will include deck plans, as well as ship construction rules for everything from starfighters to capital ships.

**In Characters**

Also in the works at WEG is the **Star Wars Character Book** (just a working title at this point), scheduled for a December release. Bill Smith at *West End* tells us "It'll have 60 new character templates including — if all goes well — Imperial player characters." Imperial PCs, Bill? "Remember," Bill continued, "just because they're [in the book] you don't have to use them, but for those of you who wanted them . . . we are listening."

**Gold Rush Gets Wired**

*Gold Rush Games* recently unveiled their new BBS. There are no chat areas, but callers can download various files, including submission guidelines, product catalog and **Night City Trax** sound files (in .WAV format).

To reach the Gold Rush BBS, set your modem to 8N1 and dial (916) 684-9443,,,,,9.

**I Vant to Change Your Name!**

*Wizards of the Coast* announced that it is officially changing the name of the Deckmaster card game **Jyhad** to **Vampire: The Eternal Struggle.**

The change is in cooperation with White Wolf Game Studios. When asked about the name change, WotC Customer Service rep J. D. Wilker stated, "the steering team for Jyhad has decided to change the card backs of the vampire cards to read 'Vampire: the Eternal Struggle', while the green-backed cards will still read 'Jyhad'."

In related news, a pocket player's guide for V:tES, called **Darkness Unveiled**, is due out this August.

**Virtual Opening**

A new **Virtual World** has opened in Pasadena, California: it offers both **BattleTech** and **Red Planet**. The new BattleTech 'mechs are available for those who are into powersuited combat: others can strap into a Screaming Broccoli in the Red Planet race game.

**A Long, Strange Trip**

The *Alderac Entertainment Group* will be coming out with a magazine-sized fiction anthology this summer under **SHADIS PRESENTS: Strange Vistas**.

The anthology will focus on original short stories based on popular gaming worlds developed by various gaming companies.

As of this writing, companies involved include Wizards of the Coast, Palladium Books, Black Dragon Press, Crunchy Frog Enterprises, Mayfair Games and many others.

"SHADIS began life as an anthology magazine," said Jolly Blackburn, the project's editor-in-chief. "This is sort of a homecoming. Initial response and involvement has been so great that I'm certain Strange Vistas is destined to become a regular publication."

Companies interested in being involved should contact the editorial staff of SHADIS.

**WOTC's in the House!**

*Wizards of the Coast* is planning to release several support books for **Ars Magica** this year, including **House of Hermes**, **Faeries**, and **Covenants**, all of which are new versions of information previously presented in other **Ars Magica** supplements.

In addition, we can expect to see "the latest, greatest version of **Ars Magica** later this year."

**On Holdime**

With the release of **Illuminati: New World Order**, Steve Jackson Games' updated card game (based

on the original Illuminati), the upcoming game **In Nomine** has seen one delay after another.

"Our fervent hope," said **Pyramid** editor Scott Haring, "is that this game will be out in late February, but it's looking more and more, sadly, like March. Hang in there."

For folks concerned about **In Nomine** becoming another **Hot Lead**, Steve Jackson has said, "**In Nomine** is at the top of our schedule after **INWO** gets out...and if something else has to be bumped a bit to let **In Nomine** make it, well, that's what will happen."

### Have You Zine?

There's a new gaming 'zine from Down Under, called **Australian Realms**. This small press role-playing publication, edited and published by Nick Leaning, details its own fantasy campaign world called Unae, and also includes "a highly original and humorous comic strip called Adventures of the A-Team."

For more information, you can contact Australian Realms at: P.O. Box 220, Morley, Westerm Australia 6943; or e-mail: nicklean@perth.dialix.oz.au.

New from *Last Unicorn Games* (publishers of the **ARIA** world books) is **Canticle**, the quarterly publication dealing with world and myth creation. For a free copy, write to Last Unicorn Games at: P.O. Box H, New Cumberland PA 17070; or e-mail them at: Monomyth@aol.com.

Another magazine from across the pond is **Interactive Fantasy** (formerly Inter*Action), from *Hogshead Publishing* in Great Britain. Interactive Fantasy is billed as "the quasi-academic journal of role-playing."

IF will be available in the U.S. on a limited basis (time to call those stores so they can get a copy for you), at a retail cost of $7.95.

### More From the Hog

Also coming from *Hogshead Publishing* this year are three role-playing systems, including the **Bugtown RPG**, based on the gonzo sci-fi comics work of Matt Howarth, and a revival of the **Warhammer Fantasy Roleplaying** game!

For more information, contact Hogshead Publishing director James Wallis at: 29a Abbeville Road, London SW4 9LA, Great Britain; or e-mail: hogshead@wonder.demon.co.uk.

### Aria Builds Momentum

Speaking of **ARIA**, *Last Unicorn Games* announced that **ARIA: Canticle of the Monomyth** has entered its second printing, following a great start since its unveiling at last year's GenCon.

Several new support products are scheduled for release this year, as well, including the **ARIA Mythguide Pack**, the first **Worlds Companion**, and the **ARIA Bestiary**.

Also coming this year from *Last Unicorn* is **Heresy: Kingdom Come**, a collectible card game set in a dark future amidst the ruin of a forsaken Earth.

**Heresy** is due out in July. Keep an eye out for this new game. Some of the artists working on the project are Rick Berry, James O'Barr, Michael Kaluta, Tom Kidd, Barclay Shaw, Dean Williams and Brom.

### PALLADIUM '95

Some of the poroducts coming from *Palldium Books* this year include: **The Phase World Sourcebook; Old Kingdom Mountains; Mystic China** for **Ninjas & Superspies**; **Rifts Book Seven: Rifts Undersea**; **Robotech; Recon;** and **Old Kingdom Lowlands**.

### Coming to a Screen Near You!

*MCA/Universal*, *TSR Inc.*, and *Ground Zero* have entered a major multimedia agreement to produce the **Wildspace** live-action television program and interactive theme park event.

Both are based on one of *TSR's* fantasy worlds, in which "brave medieval warriors are catapulted into outer space on sailing ships to battle evil creatures, space pirates, and nearly invincible fire-breathing dragons."

Twenty-two, one-hour programs are in development for prime time network television, according to a press release from TSR that appeared on the Internet.

The program will incorporate state of the art computer graphics, animation, and live action, in a production process dubbed hyperReality. Other deals in the works include an electronic game, and a line of **Wildspace** toys and games.

There are also rumors of a **Wildspace** virtual reality ride in the works at Universal Studios.

### On the Green

John Tynes of *Pagan Publishing* assures me that **Delta Green** is close to completion. "The majority of the text is written," said John, "and we're now just plugging holes in the book to make it as well-developed and useful as possible. We're shooting for a summer release, but that's not guaranteed. When the project enters a more predictable stage, we'll let everyone know. For the records, the book looks incredibly good and I think it'll knock everyone's socks off."

### Magic: The Comic Book?

That's right! Watch for a brand new comic book series, based on "that card game," to hit store shelves soon. No word on content or rarity of issues as of this writing. (Just joking, you collector maniacs).

WotC Customer Service Rep J. D. Wilker informed me that the comics will also contain **Magic: The Gathering** expansion cards.

Now there's a surprise. "Cards will be included with the comics," J. D. said. "Magic cards and Ice Age cards, depending on the comic, but these will be promotional cards only, not unique cards like the Nalathni Dragon, Arena, Sewers of Estark, or the new Windseeker Centaur from Whispering Woods."

### Your Game is Overdue...

Submitted for your perusal. Storn Cook, a well-known freelance artist whose work has graced many Hero Games' products, made an interesting discovery while browsing his local library. "I was walking through the stacks of sports books looking for references for school," Storn related, "when lo and behold! The soft-cover, 4th Edition, Champions rule book. Hey, we're literature now!"

Is this a sign of acceptance of RPGs into the mainstream American culture, a hoax perpetrated by a deviant mind, or perhaps just another side-trip into the card catalog of... the Twilight Zone?

### CD 13

**The Bureau 13 Interactive CD** for DOS, from *Take 2*, was scheduled for a national release in January or February. "It has over 90 locations and half a hundred puzzles to solve," said Tri-Tac Rep rep, Richard Tucholka. "[It's a] very nice CD game, in the tradition of 7th Guest and such."

### Goat-Tees Ahoy

*Goat-Tee Games*, a small press game company founded by Charles Paschall, announced the upcoming release of its newest effort, an action-adventure RPG called **Rapid**. Charles recently told me, "It is based on action films stressing cinematics over realism. It has a heavy lean in influence to the Hong Kong films, especially those from director John Woo."

*Goat-Tee Games'* first effort was **Mad Santa** and a **Pocket Full of Brine**, "a small and time consuming comedy RPG," explains Charles. **Rapid** is due for release this month.

### A Mild Psychosis

*Chameleon Eclectic* announced the release of **Ship of Fools**, the first campaign book for their **Psychosis** roleplaying game, in which players use Tarot cards rather than dice. "Describing Psychosis in just a few words is rather difficult," according to CE rep Charles Ryan. "It's just not like any other roleplaying game. It could be compared to some strange combination of the movies **Brazil**, **Jacob's Ladder**, and **Total Recall**, with a little bit of Spaceman Spiff thrown in for good measure."

**Ship of Fools** ships late February, followed by **Solitary Confinement** in May. A total of six campaign books are scheduled for release through the end of 1995.

### Ear to the Wall

Ok, all you rumor-mongers out there: You've been begging for juicy gd-bits so here's a small helping to dampen your appetites. Please keep in mind that the following are "rumors" and have not been confirmed as of press time.

**Collectible Dice Game?:** TSR is reportedly working on a collectible dice game. Don't laugh — insiders have been raving about the game and claim it will "rock". Everyone's being pretty tight-lipped about how the game plays though.

**Dragon Morph?:** Again, a little bird told us the Dragon staff is in the process of "relaunching" the flagship magazine of TSR. Those with high Awareness scores have noticed that there has been a shuffling of Dragon staff over the past months. We're told the 'new' Dragon will debut in August just in time for GENCON.❑

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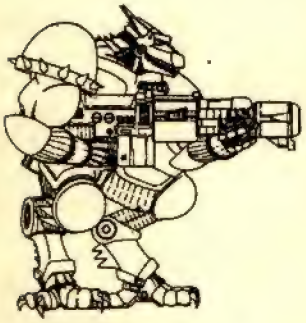

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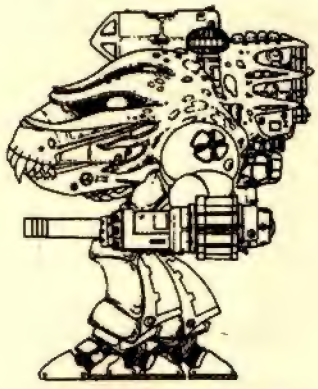

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# Post Marque™

## Special Play-By-Mail Section

Edited by Patrick M. Rodgers

Th-th-that's all, folks! This issue marks the tenth and final appearance of **Post Marque** in the pages of **SHADIS** magazine. Henceforth, we'll be appearing in **Luminary**, a production of *Quintessential Mercy Studios*. Those of you interested in obtaining a copy of Luminary can refer to the review in SHADIS #17 Zine Scene or you can write me at Post Marque, 4939 Catharine St., Philadelphia PA 19143-2007. Our new email address is PostMarque@Ferret.Com and we can be reached on the CompuServe PBMGAMES forum as 71524,2243.

They're baa-ack! *IronDragon Enterprises* has returned once again. IDE offers an excellent game, **Nexus of Mystery** (one of the few Superhero PBMs in the States), but unfortunately, they've developed a reputation for going out of business for very lengthy periods of time, ignoring letters from customers. The owner claims that they're back for good this time, and is offering a $5 credit to all former players, asking them to give him one more chance to regain their trust.

Caution is suggested, however; readers who elect to try Nexus of Mystery are advised to pay for turns one at a time. For more information, write to IronDragon Enterprises, 171 Edmunds Rd., Wellesley MA 02181-1331

It's too weird to be a lie: **Hamster World**, the PBEM game that lets players assume the role of a hamster, stuck in a pet shop cage. It gets better — hamsters are rated in the usual statistics, as well as Fighter, Thief, Mage, and Priest abilities. Email godfrey2@coventry.ac.uk to enter Hamster World, which is *free*.

**SHADIS** made a semi-official appearance at PhilCon this year, one of the granddaddies on the sci-fi/fantasy con circuit. This year saw the addition of some gaming as well - there were several monstrous **Magic: The Gathering** tournaments, with *Wizards of the Coast* present in the dealers' room, happily feeding the habit. Their newest release, **Robo Rally**, seemed to be quite a hit at the convention.

There was also a **Vampire** live-action game, run by a promising young company called *Venture Players, Inc.* In an innovative twist, the game used simulated time to create a period of a full game week over one real-time weekend. Moderation and casting were both rated top-notch by most players we spoke with. By popular demand, the same plot line will be continued at next year's PhilCon, yet another great reason to attend!

In addition to standard con fare, there was an art auction, a free Internet access room, an industrial/goth dance, and extensive filking. There was also a live band, called "Trap Door" - these guys need Ritalin, but try to catch them live before they get some; they're insane and great fun. The most impressive event had to be the masquerade (which I tried unsuccesfully to sign up for, thinking it was the Vampire game). These people take costuming seriously - even your best SCA garb isn't likely to make anyone bat an eyelash. Hollywood take note: great talent here. The crowning gem had to be an appearance by legendary author Larry Niven, both speaking and autographing.

Speaking of cons, the deadline for **PBMCon** preregistration is fast approaching (May 1st). PBMCon will be held June 2-4, 1995, in Palantine, IL, 15 minutes from O'Hare airport. Room rates are a very affordable $51 for up to quadruple occupancy. A $20 preregistration fee entitles players to participate in 2 PBM games, with additional games available at extra cost. At present, over a dozen companies are committed to running games, including Midnight Games (Legends), Flying Buffalo (Riftwars and Starweb), Coconut Council (Adventurer Kings) and others. As an added attraction, there will also be 3 days of RPGA sanctioned role playing events, and a "Midnight" Magic tournament on Friday and Saturday nights. A reduced-cost ($10.00) role-playing only registration is also available. This is an excellent opportunity to meet the faces behind the names, cement alliances, and make new enemies. To register, or to receive more information, write to PBMCon, PO Box 957434, Hoffman Estates, IL 60195 or post to 70674,2424 on CompuServe's PBMGAMES forum.

While we're doing brief asides, I'd like to draw your attention to an advertisement in this issue from **Blue Moon Rising**. In addition to some quality pieces they carry in stock, they do impressive custom work. The artwork is hand-done, but the final product is generated on a computer. If you're online, they can even email you a rough draft of the piece before it's complete! Their prices are quite reasonable, as well.

As we bid farewell to **SHADIS**, I'd like to thank a two groups of people who were instrumental in making Post Marque a success. The first group is the people who wrote for us: Gregory Benage, Bob Bost, Greg Lindahl, Vickie Lloyd, Shannon Muir, Robert Myhre, Donald Redick, Pierre Savoie, Kathleen Seymour, Jeff Spain, Trey Stone, Mike Wincek and Heidi Wolters. The second group, too numerous to mention, are the wonderful moderators and industry professionals who have been so helpful and friendly.

Regards,
Patrick M. Rodgers

### "WE'LL BE BACK"

This issue marks the end of **Post Marque** within the pages of **SHADIS.** I've been beseiged with letters in past weeks from worried readers who mistakenly thought **SHADIS** was dropping its PBM coverage.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The PBM section will undergo a name change and overhaul under new hands.

I'd like to take this opportunity to announce that **SHADIS** will continue its coverage of PBM games.

We recently approached the editor of **Flagship**, a magazine dedicated to the PBM industry and perhaps the best publication on the subject, to head up the PBM column in **SHADIS**.

Joey Brown has serving as the editor of the U.S. edition of **Flagship** and has been doing an excellent job.

Who else, we thought, to bring the latest breaking news on PBM to **SHADIS** readers?

If you are intrigued by what you see here, we encourage you to investigate PBM games further by picking up a copy of **Flagship**.

Jolly R. Blackburn

## SHIP AHOY
### New Games On the Horizon

Not content to rest on its laurels, *Game Systems Inc.* has released a new **Middle Earth PBM** variant: **ME 2950.** The game is set in a different time period, and features new characters, nations, cities, and artifacts. A new rulebook has been created for the game, as impressive and professional as the last, with an index that can be used for both variants of the game.

To get in on the action, email Gmsystminc@aol.com or contact GSI, PO Box 160129, Miami FL 33116-0129.

The concept is great — characters from any and all genres fight it out in a quest to become immortal (can't wait for the Malkav vs. Bugs Bunny deathmatch). However, the rules for Immortal could fit on a 3x5 card — in fact, here they are: Send in a powerful character from any RPG. Each turn, you are allotted a fixed amount of words to describe what actions your character will be undertaking — the number of words in each category is based on your skills (e.g. a fighter-type will be allotted more words to describe offensive actions). Despite this, the rules occupy twelve pages. You can't judge a game by its rulebook, but if the turns are as nondescript as the rulebook, the $7 turn fee may be hard to swallow. We recommend you request a sample printout before signing up. For more information, contact Synchronicity, 1750 30th St. Box #491, Boulder CO 80301-1024.

**Gunners**, the debut game from *Rebel Games*, is something akin to *Vampire: The Masquerade meets the Dukes of Hazzard*. The only thing faster than the cars or better-endowed than the guns are (in both cases) the women. In this hellish cyberpunk world, 21st Century Toys, "the world's richest new age mega coporation," has control over all street gangs, using them to distribute Pax, the drug of the future. The player characters (humans, blood-sucking vampires, beer-guzzling werewolves, and/or brain-munching zombies) must shut down the Corp and rid the world of Pax.

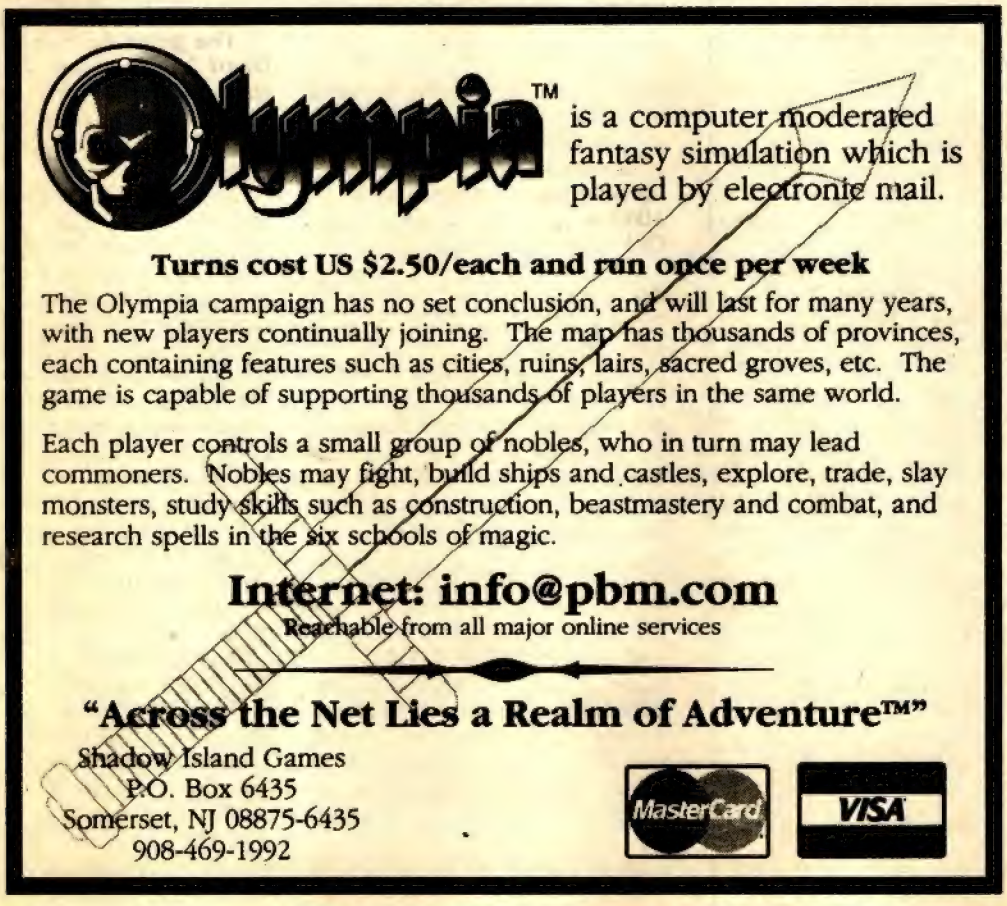
Only a draft rulebook was available at press time. There appear to be a fair number of options available to players in terms of orders, and the game features an innovative setup system. In an ambitious move, *Rebel Games* promises an audio cassette with every turn. The tape we received was rather campy (we hope intentionally) and seemed to fall under "bells and whistles" more than bona-fide features. Turns are a surprisingly low $4.00 each (the company claims a three cent profit per turn). While the narration in the sample turn we received may not impress Shakespeare, it had enough action for Schwarzenegger. One thing evident throughout the rulebook is that the product is a labor of love, moderated by people who really want their players to have fun. If you'd like to play a larger-than-life character in an even larger world, contact Rebel Games, 1324 W 42 S. #3, Wichita KS 67217.

Industry granddaddy *Flying Buffalo Inc.* has launched a new game aimed at PBM newcomers. **Riftlords** is a game of interstellar exploration, commerce, and combat. The rules, only three pages long, are very easy to understand, and cover all points of the game (an index might have been nice, though). Each player controls three ships; additional ships can be controlled for an additional fee, but the game is designed so that players cannot gain an unfair advantage by controlling extra units. The game design has been very well thought out to ensure that new players have a chance to compete, and that advanced players still enjoy the game. To entice people to try the game, *FBI* is offering free rules, setup, and three turns — what do you have to lose? Contact Flying Buffalo, PO Box 1467, Scottsdale AZ 85252-1467.

*Zion Games* offers free rules and first turn in their new product, **Stellar Knights**, a space combat game. The 18 page rulebook is laser printed, as are turns, and describes the eight basic battle scenarios available. The battle reports themselves employ somewhat repetitive text that is perhaps too descriptive, with an overabundance of exclamation points, but this may help players fine-tune their strategies as they see what specific areas were problematical for their ships.

There appears to be more detail here than in many spaceship combat games, both in the choices available to players and in the actual game mechanics, which will appeal to all but the most casual of enthusiasts. Also, while each combat will have a fixed victory condition, surviving Knights are free to continue in the game.

One nice touch in the rulebook is that the introduction is personally signed by the GM, showing some commitment to his product. To attract players new to PBM, Zion Games offers free rules, setup, and first turn, an excellent opportunity. Email PMV@aol.com or write to Zion Games, PO Box 1118, Chinook MT 59523-1118.

## MAGIKA
Review by
Pierre Savoie

**Magika** is the most prestigious school of wizardry in the world, but the Grand Wizard Christof became too old to interview and test prospective apprentices in person. So Christof molded the six Threads of Power and created the Arena of Magika, a huge cavern with a mile-high ceiling and geographic proportions. Christof foisted the task of testing batches of 12 candidates onto his subordinates, the Ebon Mages, who grew resentful of the time consumed in the Arena, "baby-sitting." Then, one Ebon Mage discovered a loophole allowing him to be the thirteenth participant; if he won, he could truthfully report that no one was deemed worthy. This display of vindictiveness only heightened my nervousness, since I was a capable dabbler in magic but totally unaccustomed to competing with 11 roughly equal foes and a vastly superior master. . . .

Meanwhile, back in the real world, I, as a total neophyte to PBM gaming, received a chance to review a PBM which comes from *Atlantic Canada*: **MAGIKA**. Ten years ago I was intrigued by the PBM section of **Space Gamer** magazine (then managed by Steve Jackson Games), but never followed up by paying the fees to start a game position.

Partly this was because of considerable coverage of player gripes about the PBMs of the time, and the game companies' dry, corporate responses. There was also space devoted to running "news" from the imaginary world of each game. Like attempts to relate RPG experiences, you just "had to be there" with the players to truly appreciate what was going on, so this only made me feel like an outsider to PBM.

However, some time has passed, and I didn't start with any bias about PBM. I assumed that, like RPGs, the quality constantly improved, honed by fans who would no longer sit still for clumsy initial efforts and lack of playtesting. I like to think of PBMs not as a separate hobby but merely a different mode of presenting a game. Despite the slow pace, they can still be interesting if strongly presented and if they give the players a lot to think (or worry) about between the turn replies. But could I, a peace-loving no-nukes collaborative RPGer, manage to get into a competitive PBM where I may be called upon to stomp the ego of a real player into the dirt?! As the film **Highlander** said, "There can be only one."

**SHADIS** worked some arcane magic, and I received by mail a 21-page rulebook in a "half-letter" digest format and acceptable typesetting, and a reassuring one-page flyer defining a PBM, **MAGIKA** and the *ChoZen FroZen* company, run by Chris "Christof" Knapp. They stress that this is a short tactical fantasy PBM also suitable for beginners (12-18 turns), in two- or three-week turns. The rules were clear and well divided into topic sections. However, I knew that I would have to study and practice the game to get a sense of the rules' deeper implications to form a winning strategy.

The gameboard is the Arena, a triangular area 26 hexes wide at the bottom, with a major game goal at the apex. Even I could see that this would automatically concentrate players near the top, at the "endgame." Each hex is of a different terrain: hills, forest, river, volcanic, and so on. Factors vary with terrain type, such as the movement cost in Endurance points to leave the hex, or percentage chance to find a spell scroll.

Players can choose a character type from five races (human, elf, dwarf, halfling or goblin), and three alignments (Good, Neutral, Evil) which are a statement of combat philosophy rather than a moral label. For example, Good spell scrolls mostly involve protection; Evil spells are mostly all-out attacks and incapacitations (for a time).

For this game, I am Dwalin the Destroyer, a Neutral Dwarf. As a Dwarf I have a 15% bonus to resisting magic effects, can not move more than 4 phases out of each five-phase turn, and am attuned to Mountain terrain where I regain more Arcania points, which fuel the casting of magic. As a Neutral mage, my preferred magic is mostly about gathering information, although there is also the Fog Map scroll which will cause another Mage's turn map to seem blank except for his position hex!

Twelve players start on the 25th row from the top, evenly spaced, with a view of their surroundings out to 3 hexes only. Information on other mages improves with proximity, but beyond 3 hexes not even terrain type is known.

The first one-page turn map therefore had a close-up view of hexes visible to me in the top half, and a mostly blank overall view of the triangular Arena on the bottom half, admirably done in color computer printing. A computer print-out in organized sections also informed me that my Spell Skill started disappointingly at 65% (racially, lower than average) that I had Know Artifact and Drop Artifact scrolls, and that my visible neighbors were Doctor Addington and Baenre Rivaldry, two hexes away, so therefore not even their race was discernible!

The 26th row is water, where there is a 100% success rate to find a scroll but which takes a lot of Endurance to leave. This is the only game where "go jump in the lake" is not an insult but a wise suggestion to start the game! Indeed, players start with only two scrolls but can (and should) hold as many as six. Each spell can be cast in either regular or Major strength, Major spells having more extended effects or acting upon more Mages, such as a three-Mage team.

For example, that Fog Map scroll I covet could be cast at the Major cost of 35 Arcania, and every Mage's turn map would be blanked out except for the hex he was in!

Since these spells are in scroll form, they are one-use only, so Mages have to scramble around occasionally and spend the odd phase Searching for more scrolls. I didn't like this aspect so much because it combines spell limitations from two different philosophies: consumable spells from **AD&D**, and sorcery casting percentages that start at less than 100% as in the **RuneQuest** game. Of the total list of 36 spells, I could endure a frustrating search for just the perfect spell scroll, and when I expend it, it might not even work. Ebon help us!

Mages may also acquire helpful Artifacts, one corresponding to each of the races, alignments and ability stats. A player always knows the location of his racial Artifact and the general direction of his alignment Artifact. In addition, if he can find and unite the Crown of Good, the Orb of Neutrality and the Scepter of Evil, he will win the game. If this doesn't happen, the final scoring system emphasizes being closer to the top hex than other players, and the Endurance, Arcania, Spell Skill and Aptitude ratings that you have left at game's end. Players may also find Cloaks of six different colors, corresponding to the six Threads of Power. This is a way to form teams of three mages who can share spell effects and information.

My orders on turn one consisted of a "Cast" of a Knowledge of Artifacts scroll, a "Move" into an ocean hex, and three "Searches" (for spell scrolls, with automatic success in oceans).

There was also diplomacy possible, in the form of three messages allowed each turn. I don't think that's enough messages, though, for later game turns, but I introduced myself to Dr. Addington all the same. I realized that the movement cost chart varied with the phase you move and how many moves you took before in the turn, so I would probably have to Rest at least one phase (to regain Endurance and avoid an early-move penalty) and maybe Meditate (to regain Arcania).

But, fortunately for me, I saw no Ebon Mage: the magical master whose inscrutable game goals might sometimes help me, or hinder me by Demanding artifacts (but only once a mage has picked one up). In his own mysterious way, the Ebon Mage must provide assistance to candidates but also has a hidden agenda to win and shut us all out.

He wasn't around, luckily — but wait! A careful rules review showed the Ebon Mage has a permanent version of the Teleport scroll, so that will put a Mage's nerves on edge if he "pops up."

The game describes what my Dwarf "sees" in a phase-by-phase text-story, which is obviously generated by a human being, and this is a nice addition to the computer-moderated game turns. My Dwarf, Dwalin, could suddenly "see" the hex positions of the three alignment Artifacts.

There was some confusion concerning the spell effects; I had assumed I could detect more Artifacts than just the alignment ones. The text also described my dwarf's easy move into the ocean and my strenuous exertions to strip down to my shorts and dive three times into the sea, coming up successfully with a magic item each time.

General messages also came in from many other players, introductions and lots of bragging as well. Dr. Addington also sent a friendly message suggesting we stick together and move up the peninsula that we shared.

The other nearby player, Baenre, was still not discernible but had suddenly jumped first into a river and then into the peninsula formerly occupied only by me and Addington. What was he up to? Was he a mage of "evil" alignment, itching to try out an offensive spell for possible advancement? Baenre worries me, since he made no effort to talk to me.

No matter. For my second turn I cast Heals on myself to recover Endurance. Realizing that my spell

skill might fail, I also Rested in the second phase, and then a series of three quick Moves north took me into coastal and then plains terrain. I calculated that even if the Heals scroll failed, I could still cobble enough Endurance to get out of the water hex and cruise forward.

Since I would only get going on my third phase, there was a chance that a quick Mage could walk up to my water hex and conk me with a spell before I got going in the phase's priority order of actions (magic use occurs before movement is figured). Just the thing to keep me worrying until next turn came in the mail!

I procrastinated a bit and my turn was received late by some vagary of the Internet, but I wasn't too worried since the default turn chosen for me got Dwalin out of the water and resting more or less as I wanted. However, that mage Baenre was still approaching me and **still** hadn't sent me any message of his intentions! Very disturbing! So for my third turn I chose to burn extra Endurance to jackrabbit out of there in my very first phase, and then do a combination of Moves and Rests to progress North. I also Cast my Heals scroll that hadn't been used because of sending in my late turn.

The terrain was slowly but surely shifting into more difficult types, and I noticed forests and even a swamp hex far to my North. Oh, great; the goblin race is attuned to swamps! When was my Dwarf going to find nice, clean mountains?

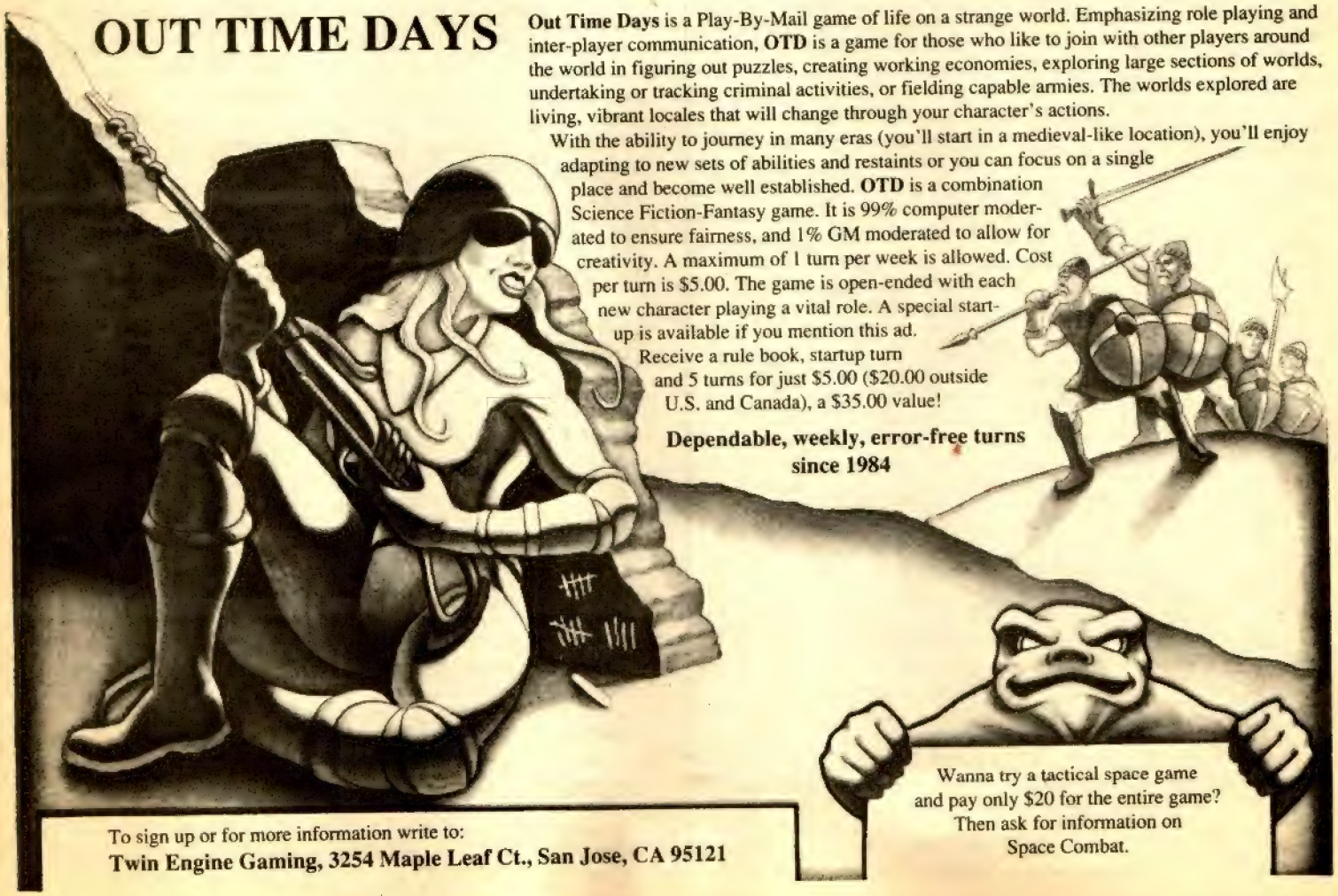
The game is continuing. As a beginner to PBM I can say that the rules are manageable, and some aspects such as the character stats are simple. There is also a good foundation of tension and uncertainty between turns, since a scroll is not absolutely certain to be Cast properly and, as it happened, even in the beginning turns a neighboring mage appeared to be threatening me (I am still unsure if he's evil; I'm sending him a greeting this turn). But, who's to say if the *other* mage is as friendly as he sounds? As a beginner even the initial turns retained my interest, and I am anticipating tense confrontations as each Mage tries to outwit the other, with an eye to the priority order of simultaneous phase-actions.

Unlike the PBMs of ten years ago that I read about, GEnie or Internet is available for fast submission of turns, and there will even be a file utility called CAMP to pass turn results and color graphic maps to the players, or at least this is coming soon. This is a great new development to ease the uncertainty of what 'netters disparagingly call the Snail Mail (and besides, Canada Post is overdue for its annual strike!) For the purposes of the review I asked for turns and color maps to be mailed to me in the regular way, but I sent turns back by Internet. I hasten to add that the late turn appeared to be an Internet fault at my end, not the game master's.

However, a three-week game, originally designed to cope with cross-border mail delay, is a touch too slow for me and I was really only playing the game in a cycle of ten days' careful pondering and ten days where I put the game out of my mind waiting for results to be compiled and mailed. Maybe I should have posted the map up near my desk to keep me worried about that rival mage on my butt, and to chart alternative strategies. I am also publicizing my net address, to get more chatting and "diplomacy" than the three messages per turn allow.

Players of **Magic: the Gathering** may find that the six-scroll limit and the infrequent "finds" in ordinary terrain may be quite different from what they are used to. I still find the combination of expended scrolls and less than perfect casting percentage chance a bit of a handicapping combination, and the game might be decided by one mage's particularly lucky scroll find as the others still struggle to build up their repertoire of scrolls. I thought I was being clever by finding scrolls in the ocean, but is the winning strategy to race North as fast as one can? I shall have to see as the terrain types become more varied and difficult to cross, and as the rival mages and the mysterious Ebon Mage are funneled ever closer. . . .

**MAGIKA**, by *ChoZen FroZen Games* (850 Shawn Drive; Kingston, NS; B0P 1R0; CANADA.) FAX/BBS

(902) 765-0513. Internet: c.knapp@genie.geis.com

Two or three-week game turns offered. Set-up, rulebook, 4 turns, US$15 (CDN$20). Rulebook only, US$3 (CDN$4). Turn fees (regular mail or CAMP disk mailer) US$3.50 (CDN$5). Make checks and money-orders payable directly to Chris Knapp.

**CAMP** refers to Computer Assistant to Magika Play, an IBM program being developed to enable receipt and processing of E-mail turns, including maps in color graphics files. CAMP turns by E-mail would be only US$2.50 (CDN$3.50).

*ChoZen FroZen* is a member of the Postal Gaming Network, an association of companies and moderators dedicated to helping players find a PBM game suitable to their wants and needs, no matter who runs it. Write for more info.

## You Rule!
### A Review
by Robert Myhre

*"Sergeant, are those troops trained yet, na?" I looked over toward the growing ranks of dwarves filling the streets. Some of them actually looked ready for battle while others looked as if they would turn and run at the first sword thrust.*

*"Yes sir, General! We have 100 dwarven units, all with chain mail and swords."*

*"About time," I replied. This should be a glorious battle, I thought, even with these novice troops. There is nothing dwarves hate worse than trolls, and I was about to send them to a province filled with trolls.*

*"Do you think the troops will run into any orcs, General Chin, na?"*

*"Are you a fool, boy? Of course there won't be any orcs. We are sending the dwarves to a swamp where trolls live, not to a jungle where those foul orcs live!" Of course, I didn't mention that the enemy might have allies, that he might be expecting us, and that there might be a large force of orcs waiting in ambush. Besides, the odds of that happening were slim.*

*"Send them to Opulent, sergeant. And for good measure have that wizard cast his Quick spell on the troops to ensure they arrive today! And watch out for that ant, Ares."*

*"Yes sir!" The young sergeant promptly stepped on the ant and then immediately turned and left, carrying out my orders. Knowing that he would do exactly what he was told, I decided it was time to leave. There was nothing to do now but wait.*

*Three days later the reports arrived. The unthinkable had occurred. My enemy did not have an ally come to his aid; rather a mutual enemy had entered the picture. He had attacked Opulent with two armies — one force of orcs and another force of dwarves. My troops arrived as scheduled and began fighting the dwarven force. They won, but there were heavy casualties. That was when the orc force arrived. They outnumbered my troops and they had a hatred for the dwarves. The battle was over quickly. The only good news was that the trolls beat the orc force. We were back to square one and it was time to train new troops.*

The above story is a fictional account of a possible event that might occur in the medieval war game, **You Rule!** I had the opportunity to help playtest the final version of this game over the Internet and I have not been disappointed.

When I received the startup turn for my game, I was a bit overwhelmed. Not because the rules were difficult, but merely because this was my first play-by-mail game. Before I even sat down to read the rules, I had convinced myself that this was going to be difficult to play because I was a novice. The first thing I noticed about the rules was the excellent layout of the book. The table of contents had all the topics listed, and the appendix had a complete listing of all the commands used for the turns. As I read through the rule book I was impressed by the professional look of laser printing and easy reading. When I had finished reading the book, I knew that I was ready to play. Nothing could have been easier.

When a player first begins the game, he is given a single province in a continent full of provinces. A fun aspect of the game is the names given to the provinces. Each province has a unique single word name. The turn commands make use of the first three letters of each province. Some of these names are Gaudy, Macabre, Putrid, Quiescent, Wasted, and Wonky. These provinces cannot be renamed, but I did not find that I needed to rename them.

The object of the game is to control the majority of the continent. The percentage depends on if you are trying to win the game by yourself or with allies. I would highly recommend that beginners try to find allies as quickly as possible; however, I think that as a good challenge for an experienced player, conquering the continent alone would be fun.

The premise behind the games lies in the races. Each race has an inherent advantage over another race while at the same time having a large disadvantage against another race. The six races are Ogres, Humans, Orcs, Dwarves, Trolls, and Elves, in order of dominance. For example, humans have an advantage over, or rule over, orcs while orcs rule over dwarves.

At the same time, trolls are at a disadvantage to, or ruled by, dwarves, etc. One of the unique features of this game allows a player to have forces of each race instead of limiting you to a single race.

As you begin conquering other provinces you gain access to other races. Ideally a player should have at least one of each race to help the battles end favorably. Each province is settled by a specific race that has adapted to a specific terrain feature. Trolls live in swamps, dwarves live in deserts, and so on.

When you wish to attack a province with an army, you try to use troops that rule over the race you are attacking, and you try not to use troops that are ruled over by that race.

Players can create several types of character classes during the game. These classes are doctors, accountants, generals, spies, farmers, lumberjacks, metalsmiths, wizards, and stonemasons. Doctors help increase the population growth of a province which in turn helps bring in more taxes. Accountants manage finances which increases available gold. Generals lead troops. Spies gather information on other provinces, assassinate enemy characters, and steal magic items. Farmers, lumberjacks, metalsmiths, and stonemasons help increase the production of each province. Finally, wizards can cast a multitude of spells.

Each province that is owned by a player produces some quantity of food, metal, stone, and wood. This amount of each item can be increased each turn by spending money on increasing production. This can be done a maximum of four turns for each province.

When you have produced a sufficient quantity you may use these items in such ways as training troops, building roads for faster movement, building castles for defense, and making armor and weapons. Each of these items requires a specific amount of any one or all commodities, as described in the handy little table at the back of the book.

Finally, this game would not be complete without the troops. You can train troops each turn in any province as long as you have enough gold, food, metal, stone, and wood. These troops are then used to try and conquer other provinces. Sounds easy, but it is actually a big step. The rule book lists many factors that can make one force superior to another and it can get quite involved. As mentioned before, if one race rules over or is ruled by another race it can create quite a difference. New players should make special note of this in the rule book. It will definitely help out later in the game. Other factors that can change the strength of your troops include if your force is being led by a general and what level that general is, if your force carries chain mail or shields, if your force carries swords or bows, if your force is hungry, and if your force is attacking another race on their native terrain. Of course, all these same factors can hinder or help your enemy's forces as well.

Bob and Debbie Thomson have been extremely helpful and insightful while playing this game. They have been open to suggestions and have even modified or added new options to the game suggested by playtesters. I have made a suggestion to include naval combat and they have assured me that they have been planning on adding this feature. If these two moderators continue to improve on this game and listen to feedback, the game will continue to evolve and become increasingly more enjoyable to play. Overall I have been extremely pleased with this game, and I am looking forward to finishing this one and playing again. If you are a new player who is hesitant to start play-by-mail gaming because of the sheer volume of games, this is an excellent place to start. The game is closed ended, computer moderated, and sufficiently small that you can step in without feeling lost. If you are an experienced player and would like to try a quick game of warfare, definitely give this a try. Your opinions would be more than welcome and you might become a regular player.

**You Rule!** is produced by Llucky Llama Games, 80-Q N. Cabrillo Hwy., Box #226, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019. You can also reach them through the internet at llucky@crl.com or CompuServe's PBMGAMES forum at 74044,325. The rulebook, setup and one turn are $10.00; rules alone are $7.50, which can be applied towards the setup package. Additional turns are $5.50 if mailed or $4.50 if you can send them electronically.

*[Editor's note: See our Ship Ahoy! section for a You Rule! news flash.]* ❑

**In the past**, ancient priests, shamans, and wise men recognized the existence of magic and the presence of vampires, ghosts and demons. They were not things of myth or legend, but an accepted part of every day life. The people prayed and struggled against these dark forces, keeping them in check.

**Ley lines.** The ancient orientals called them *Feng-shui*, dragon tracks. Lines of mystic energy. Along these lines of energy demons and other supernatural beings could enter our world and sorcerers could draw upon great magic. The Chinese studied these lines, learned their secrets, and developed *Geomancy* which is practiced to this very day.

**Today**, humankind has rejected the concept of magic and monsters. They dismiss such notions as superstition, myth and madness. They ignore the most blatant evidence to the contrary and happily bury it under scientific explanations, whether they make sense or not. And the monsters flourish.

Demonic, hellish abominations stalk the streets. Vampires roam the night freely. Supernatural predators lie in wait in the alley ways and ghosts haunt the ruins of urban decay. Earth is being invaded and nobody will stop the tide of invasion because they won't admit the invaders exist.

On another front, the ley lines pulse with mystic energy long forgotten or ignored. An energy tapped by a handful of men and women (and supernatural abominations) who have rediscovered arcane knowledge. Some are protectors of the innocent and seekers of truth and knowledge. Others are selfish, vengeful or evil people who serve the forces of evil, both human and inhuman, and unleash the primordial forces they summon into our unsuspecting world.

**Fate.** Humankind's defense has fallen to the hands of madmen and crackpots: mystics, psychics, paranormal investigators, arcanists and other believers in magic and the supernatural. An underground society scorned by the authorities, mocked by men of science and dismissed by the public. Thus, they wage a private and secret war against the supernatural and the forces of evil. They are the shadowy sentinels who watch over us while we sleep.

Meanwhile, the mean streets continue to get a little scarier and much more dangerous.

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If you play **Rifts**, you already know the game mechanics of magic and ley lines, as well as their full power and danger. Perhaps the right characters at the right time could prevent the "Coming of the Rifts." But to do so they must unlock the secrets of magic and fight the horrors of the supernatural.

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# NEW PERSPECTIVES

## The World of Miniatures

By Ken Carpenter • Photos by Don Witmer

Most collectors of metal figurines do more than just collect them. Many are players with plans to use them in one game or another. Others are painters and modelers. Usually a miniatures or role-playing gamer will paint their figures for use with the aforementioned games. After all, gaming with a bunch of base-metal figures would confuse even the most astute of generals.

Painters and modelers get interested in figures because they appreciate the art of the miniature and want to contribute their own talents to the finished product. These folks may not have even played a game requiring such figures, but are attracted to the work itself.

Inspired by letters and conversations with interested readers (from both SHADIS and Dragon — you know who you are...), this column is a study of the paints and brushes that are available to you, the miniatures hobbyist.

Since each painter looks for certain, often quite differing, qualities in their paint supplies, this isn't an attempt to review or rate the products. There are few absolutes with regards to paints and brushes, only opinions. And whose opinion is more important than yours? Instead this will be a discussion of their properties, providing information you might need to decide which ones best suit your needs.

There are many qualities to watch for in your paints. Some of the variables are; consistency (the thickness of the paint); texture; coverage (how well the paint covers the area); how it dilutes (for washes); and its use for highlighting. Consistency and texture are a matter of choice, but coverage and use for washing and drybrushing are universal concerns. Prices range from $1.69 to $2.00 per bottle for most acrylics and $3 to $7 for tube acrylic paints, based on color and tube size.

Consistency ranges from runny, which is a tough paint to start with, to as thick as paste, with a hundred levels in between. Often, a paint's coverage is tied to its consistency, since a thicker paint is more likely to cover in a single coat.

Thick paint won't flow as well off the brush, however. Brush flow can be improved by adding a bit of water to the paint, but you may lose a little of the coverage. Coverage is a key element of a paint. What good is this really great orange paint when you have to apply eight coats before the primer is fully opaqued? Light colors tend to have a harder time with coverage than dark, often allowing the undercoat, even a light colored primer, to show through until you have a few coats on. The worst color for this is yellow.

Dilutions, used for washing, can expose yet another problem — large pigment size. With low quality paints, you can actually see the pigments floating or clotting in your dilution.

You will usually want your wash to be a smooth, gentle shading of color. If you have quality-challenged paints (politically correct term for lousy paints), that may be a difficult effect to achieve. This shouldn't happen with finely ground pigments, as used in better grade paints. Highlighting also depends on pigment grind. If the pigment particles are larger, from a cheaper paint, or if the consistency is on the thick side, your drybrushing can result in grainy highlights. One way to deal with the consistency problem is to add just a little water to the color, in a separate mixing palette (always use a palette for mixing and diluting paints), so the paint will flow better.

Paints are usually smooth textured, but there are some specialty paints that crack as they dry, or clot up like stucco.

These are not your typical paints, however, so you will likely have to hunt if you want one of these odd textured paints. If your paint cracks or grows lumpy when you paint, and it's not one of these specialty paints, you are either putting it on too thick or are using a really poor paint.

When looking for brushes, some of the properties that interest you are; material (what it's made from); how well the paint flows along the bristles; how durable the brush is; and how well the brush keeps its shape. Brushes are undoubtedly the most consumable products you will use when painting. If you started with a dozen bottles of paint and a dozen brushes, you will most certainly be buying brushes before you run out of those paints, and brushes cost more. Consequently, you'll want to get the best brushes for your money.

There are three basic fibers used to make brushes: Camel hair (camel hair brushes aren't necessarily camel hair, but you don't want a different name for every kind of hair used in that category), Sable (expensive but high quality), and synthetic.

The shapes most commonly used in miniatures painting include round, spotter, and flat, with sizes ranging from 10/0 to #3. Typical flats might range from 3/32 inch to 1/4 inch. Other brushes might prove useful on occasion, but these are the ones you'll use most often.

Prices range from $1.95 to $4.95 per brush. The low price would buy you a cheap camel hair while the high price would buy you a sable or synthetic brush of high quality. The higher priced brushes almost always hold their shape better and are more durable. Brushes are an excellent application for the old adage 'You get what you pay for'.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank the following companies for participating in this issue's column; *The Armory*, *Citadel*, *Chessex*, *Daler-Rowney/Robert Simmons*, *Floquil/Polly S*, *Global Games*, *Liquitex*, and *Ral Partha*. Each was kind enough to provide samples of their current paint and/or brush products, which will be discussed later in the column.

Rather than trying to detail each manufacturer's entire line, there will be an overview of the available products (that I am aware of) and then a discussion of their properties.

# The war is over...

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Imp 0 | - | Consecration of the Imperial Dynasty Throne. |
| Imp 476:220 | - | They find us. The grubs make contact. |
| Imp 476:223 | - | Tau Albriton falls in a single day. |
| Imp 476:360 | - | Brood forced out of the Tau Albriton system. Human losses estimated at over 20 million. |
| Imp 493:33 | - | The infestation reaches the Imperial Core. |
| Imp 511 | - | The Imperium falls. Wanting to break all ties to the old Empire, the remaining provinces restart the calendar. Imp 511 becomes 0 AL (Annus Libertatis: Year of Liberty). |
| 7 AL | - | The Empire is in ruin. Petty houses vie for the remains. Houses that fled during the war have returned, bringing with them two alien empires more powerful than any terran has ever seen. You can despair or... |

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**Armory Paints & Brushes with Grenadier's Satellite Team Miniature (1 of 2)**

## The Armory Paints

The *Armory* carries a large range of paints for every fantasy or military need. The line includes an extensive array of metallic paints, satins, and flesh tones. They also carry spray primers, brush primers, and clear coat sprays.

I thought the variety of flesh tones, from damsel to nubian, was a great idea. Though I often mix my own paints, there is nothing worse than forgetting how you reached a particular shade of flesh, especially when you're trying to do some touch up work on it. Using an off-the-shelf color provides a degree of security, and a good range of flesh tones makes that an easy option.

Their wide range of metallics includes many colors and shades. The natural metals, such as bronze, brass, gold, and silver, are impressively true to color, with the gold being a dingy gold rather than a bright gold. Other metallics include blues, reds, greens, etc.

The paints' consistency runs a little thick, but just a little. You can use it right out of the bottle, but you might want to add a little water before application. These paints provide very good coverage in one coat of paint. Even a shade of yellow covered amazingly well in one coat, though I would recommend a second coat if you want to ensure the true color.

Diluting the *Armory* paints resulted in stable shades with no evidence of clotting. Light applications gave smooth color changes. As a highlighting paint, I recommend a slight dilution before drybrushing. This will prevent a tendency to give a thicker than necessary build up. Used this way, the paints gave very good results.

The *Armory* brushes range from 10 to a package (camel hair brushes) to four to a package (gold nylon brushes). The gold nylon are more expensive, but the improvement in quality is worth it. Gold nylon is a synthetic fiber that holds its shape well and is more durable than the cheaper camel hair. The camel hair wouldn't be sufficient for serious miniatures painters, but do work well for painting terrain and large models. The nylon is also more useful for small applications than the camel hair and the flow is more consistent.

Strengths — Metallics and flesh tones are exceptional, huge selection of quality paints, good synthetic brushes.

## Chessex Magic Wand Paints

The **Dragon Colours**, **Dragon Metals**, and **Dragon Stains** make up a whole line of paints from *Chessex*. This is a relatively new line, when you consider the years that some of the other makers have been around, but it is definitely worthy of note.

The line contains dozens of colors, with the metallic line adding some incredible shades. The stains are inks that can be used full strength or diluted, for special effects. The paints range from bright, vivid colors to more muted, medieval colors.

Consistency is variable, due partially to the differing types of paint. The stains are thin, spreading like water, while the paints are thicker, about the same as the *Armory* paints in consistency. The metals lie somewhere between.

Coverage was good with the paints I toyed with. The lighter colors (such as yellow) are about average in coverage, so a couple of coats will be required to opaque the undercoat. You may want to dilute the colors, though the metals don't need it.

While the paints are good quality and perform very well, I was most impressed with the stains, which apply like high

**Chessex Magic Wand Paints**

**Citadel Paints and Brushes**

quality inks, not poor imitations. The stains have a wide range as well.

Dilute them for a glazed look but keep them full strength for use in detailing and deep shading.

A couple of the bottles I have were mismarked (a colour was labeled a wash and a metallic was labelled a colour), but that's just a minor production glitch. You can easily recognize metals from the silvery layer of pigment at the bottom of the bottle before you mix it. You can also recognize stains and washes by the liquidy slosh when you shake the bottle.

The various Dragon paints are also available in sets of various size and purpose. To the best of my knowledge, there are no brushes in this line.

Strengths — Large selection of washes and stains, great variety of metallics, good quality paints.

## Citadel Paints

*Citadel* recently released a whole new line of paints, with higher quality and more vivid colors. Most commonly found in sets, at least so far, they include a **Basic** set, **High Elves**, **Orks** and **Goblins**, and a growing list of others. The entire line will likely be available individually in the near future.

The set includes some colors of astounding beauty and brightness. A selection of vivid primary colors, such as ruby red and lightning bolt blue, ensure some eye catching choices when you plan your color schemes.

Metallics are included in the line, but I've only seen a couple and can't really comment on them. The current *Citadel* paint list shows 12 metallics and 18 washes and glazes.

The consistency is a little thick, but the paints can be used either straight out of the bottle or diluted with a bit of water. The dilution gives better flow from the brush but slightly lighter coverage. This really only impacts light colors, such as Sunburst Yellow.

Diluting for a wash resulted in an even shade without clotting. Light applications of wash turned out great. Highlighting works best if you dilute the color with a bit of water.

Citadel brushes appear to be sable. The brushes are high quality and keep their shape well when properly cared for (a must for all brushes). My only objection is that the brushes aren't marked with standard sizes, just 'Detail Brush', 'Small Drybrush', etc. If you are used to brush sizes and think in those terms, the brush names are rather like renaming your golf irons "really far", "medium far", "kinda far", etc. But if you can look at a brush and decide if it suits your purpose, the names shouldn't cause you any problems at all.

The brushes all worked very well and had excellent flow. I didn't always use them as the label suggested, but that's a matter of personal interpretations. My small drybrush requirements demand something smaller than the 'Small Drybrush', though the brush did come in useful for many drybrushing needs.

Strengths — Vivid colors, quality paints, good brushes.

## Daler-Rowney Cryla Paints

*Daler-Rowney* is the manufacturer of Cryla tube acrylics, among many other art supplies. You might ask why tube paints were included in this article. The reason is this — they are a great value. They come in a very thick consistency, like toothpaste, so dilution is required for miniature painting purposes, but they last nearly forever.

**Liquitex Tube Paints, Daler-Rowney Tube Paints, Robert Simmons Brushes**

# TEMPTATION IN THE MAIL

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While I don't often use them for miniatures painting (at least not small figures), because getting the right consistency for 25mm painting is a tricky feat, they are invaluable when I paint terrain or table top environs. Tube acrylics are also perfect for larger figures, like dragons.

Though they come very thick, the pigment size is comparable to those paints traditionally used in miniatures painting, so dilutions produce expected results. Diluting for wash yields uniform, soft shades of color that apply evenly. Coverage is good at the right consistency and you can even get some effective textures at full strength.

In addition to paints and other artist mediums, *Daler-Rowney* manufactures the **Robert Simmons** brand of artist brushes. They have everything from quality camel hair brushes to red sable to white sable (a synthetic fibre). They may run a quarter or two more, but there is no doubting the quality.

The flow of paint from the brushes I tested, the **Craft Painter**, the **Aquatip**, the **Hobby Brush**, and the **White Sable**, was exceptional. The brushes kept their shape despite prolonged usage with all consistencies of paint.

I was very impressed with the **Robert Simmons** brushes, though I was particularly partial to the **Hobby Brush** and **Aquatip**, favoring the oversized handle for better control. While the **Craft Painter** is meant for water color, it still performs well with acrylic.

**Global Games Color-Drop Paints**

Strengths — Good selection of quality paints, inexpensive (in the long run), excellent brush lines.

## Floquil/Polly S Paints

Recognizably the grandaddy of all miniatures paints, **Polly S** has been around as long as I can remember. Because of the longevity of the line, it has about every color imaginable, with special lines for Fantasy colors and Metallics.

*Floquil* makes spray primers in a variety of colors and spray finishes to protect your painted figures. *Floquil* has a 'dead flat' matt finish that is true matt: no traces of gloss at all. For special effects, you might use the matt finish to coat a figure and then use a brush-on semi-gloss finish to touch up things that you want to appear wet or polished. It works great.

**Polly S**' extensive line of metallics includes many colors you won't see anywhere else (such as Oxidized Aluminum and Graphite). Are these colors really distinctive, you ask? Yes.

The effect that I got when I used Oxidized Aluminum as a base, washed with diluted black, then drybrushed with Pewter, could not possibly be done with silver, chainmail, or other typical fantasy colors. The effect was quite unique.

The consistency of the **Polly S** paints is what I would consider the standard. That is to say, it comes in the consistency that most painters use, or to which you might dilute thicker paints. As such, no dilution is required to use the paint, it may be used right out of the bottle (until time passes and the paint begins to thicken, as all paints will).

Coverage is very good for all but the lightest paints (the typical problems being white and yellow). The medium and darker paints make great one-coat base paints. Dilutions produce even shades of wash with no tendency to clump. The wash applies well with no grainy look.

Highlighting is no problem either, though a little dilution will keep down chances of successive drybrushing creating a grainy texture.

Boy do *Floquil* brushes take a beating! I used a **Golden Fox #1** brush for hours of

**Floquil - PollyS Paints (Fantasy & Metallic) with Floquil Brushes**

painting (in excess of 30) without any notable change in the brushes shape or flow. I was pleasantly surprised at the staying power and will definitely be adding more Floquil brushes to my supplies.

Strengths — Huge selection of high quality paints, large line of metallics, great brushes, excellent matt finish.

## Global Games Color Drop System

The **Color Drop** system is brand new from *Global*. In fact, as I write this, it won't be released for another month or two. They were kind enough to send a few samples from their upcoming initial release to see how they did in this study.

One of the major differences between **Color Drop** paints and the others is that they come in a dropper bottle. The advantage of the bottle is that painters can more easily mix paints and remember how they did it (2 drops red, 1 drop blue, etc.). The lid can also come off if you want more than a drop or two.

The paints are slightly different from other paints, which might explain the gelatinous consistency. Without knowing what that difference is, I have noted that it adheres like few other paints. Using a diluted black paint as a black-wash, often used to bring out the detail of bare-metal figures, the results were some of the best I've seen. There are no brushes available in this line, that I know of.

Strengths — quality paints, high adherence, great wash potential.

## Liquitex Paints

Another manufacturer of acrylic paints, *Liquitex* comes in tubes or plastic bottles called **Concentrated Artist Paints** (at least they used to). These have the same advantages as the *Daler-Rowney* tube acrylics — inexpensive in the long run, good variety of colors, capable of holding texture.

**Liquitex** is easily accessible at art or craft stores. The consistency is like toothpaste and will have to be diluted before use. Be careful of the consistency for small figures, at least with the tube paint — the bottles are fine with a little dilution. The tubes are great for terrain and large figures.

Works great for washes and can be used for highlighting if diluted to the proper consistency. They also have a paint retardant that will slow the drying time of acrylics, allowing you to blend as if using oils. *Liquitex* also makes brushes, from sable to synthetic, in a wide selection.

Strengths — Good selection of quality paints, inexpensive, good brushes.

**Ral Partha Paints & Brushes with Ral Partha's Female Shaman Figure**

## Ral Partha Paints

In addition to a huge line of paints, including metallics, Ral Partha makes spray primer, brush primer, and clear spray finish. They also have a small line of brushes.

The consistency is a bit thick, like *Armory* and *Citadel* paints, but they may be used without dilution. Dilution for wash resulted in an even color that produced good results. Dilute before drybrushing, as with the other thick paints. Successive layers of highlighting turned out very well after diluting the paint a little.

The brushes are synthetic and have good flow. They also hold up well to constant usage, holding their shape. As far as I know, their brush line only consists of rounds and flats, ranging from 5/0 to 1, except the flats which include #3.

Strengths — Huge range of quality paints, including a good selection of metallics, good brushes.

## Summary

Armory paints have come a long way in the last 5 or ten years also. I was always impressed with the metallics and some of the specialty paints, like fluorescent, silks & satins, etc, but the basic line wasn't consistent in its quality. Now that stigma is gone.

Ultimately, my recommendation comes to this: Get a couple paints from a few brands, and in varying colors, then take them home and use them. Start with primary colors and one or two metallics, not a bunch of specialty paints that you'll only use once in a while. Make sure you get at least a couple Polly S paints, if for no other reason than to gauge the consistency of your other paints.

As for brushes, you can't really do the same thing. They're just too darned expensive to go out and buy a dozen or so for testing. I would suggest that you buy 4 brushes initially - two sable brushes and two synthetic.

After painting with those brushes for a while, you will develop a preference for one or the other. Then you can go out and buy half a dozen of that material from a couple manufacturers and in varying sizes. Eventually you will build up a range of brushes from a couple of your favorite manufacturers.

At a minimum you'll need a 5/0, 3/0, 0, and #2. A #1 is helpful but you can add it as your selection grows. When your brushes start to wear out, you can use them as drybrushes.

**Alderac Entertainment Group** (you know them as the publishers of *SHADIS*) and I are in the process of producing a series called **The Miniatures Hobbyist**. This series of books will address many facets of the miniatures hobby, from miniatures painting to terrain building to gaming scenarios. The first of the series will be available in May and will address miniatures painting for the novice painter. The purpose of the series is to provide easy to read and follow guides that help you improve your skills, in painting, modeling, and gaming, as much as you'd like.

As always, you can write with your questions or comments to: New Perspectives, P.O. Box 9, Murrieta, CA 92562. ❑

# The Market Platz

## The Market's Open

*The Market Platz* is a meeting place where readers pass along information, barter, trade and gossip. Readers are invited to place classified ads, announce group meetings, seek out other players, etc.

Subscribers may place classified ads free of charge with a limit of one ad per issue and a maximum of twenty-five words. Non-subscribers can place ads for 25¢ per word with a limit of twenty-five words.

Convention announcements, group meetings and public service notices can be placed free of charge.

Ads will be placed on a first-come-first-served basis, with subscribers having priority.

## Classifieds

**Wanted:**
Copy of **Escape from Colditz** (version with wooden pieces!) Also looking for **GREAT ESCAPE** board game. Contact Editor at SHADIS address.

**Wanted:**
Finieous Fingers miniatures set. Write Ken Carpenter P.O. Box 9, Murrieta, CA 92562 with price.

Missy,
Walk like an Egyptian! Oo-wee-oo! Can't wait to see you again!
One-tin-soldier

**Hey Amber!**
Heard you've been under the weather - get well soon. Will see you soon - we'll have lots to talk about, I'm sure.
Love Daddy

**Marlboro Girl**
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**MOBI-Con '95** June 9, 10, 11 Comics, SF, Fantasy, and gaming convention. At the Holiday Inn Downtown, Mobile, AL. LARP Vampire with Sam Chupp! Also: Margaret Weis, Don Perrin, Douglas Niles. For more info: POBox 161257, Mobile, AL 36166.

**R.I.P. Joe Genero**
The average gladiator gave his all in the OrcCon *Duelmasters* tournament. His average stats, average weapon, and average style made him an average crowd favorite. His average record: 2 — 2.

**"Like a Rock Sheri!!!"**

Bri & Andy,
Good luck with the move and house-hunting! Make sure there's a yellow-bricked road nearby so I can find you all.
Wiz of Oz

**Valley Girl,**
I'd stop the world and melt with you. See you in a few months.
Z

**WANTED**
Writers/Artists
Myrmidon Press (ManHunter™) is looking for talented people. Write to P.O. Box 1374 Royal Oak, MI 48068 for more details.

**Jägermeister Queen,**
See you in New Orleans.
Jokeman

**EXCUSE ME!**

I've been ordered
to cut away some fat and gristle
from this here rag — but to be
honest, I'm not quite sure where
to start. You see, I never was a
good reader — but hey, you don't
want to hear my sad story.
The long and short of it is, I value
my job here at SHADIS. I mean, I
get to eat what I put
to the axe and all.
But, what if I cut away some good
morsel or juicy tidbit?
Oh my, that just wouldn't do.
I'd lose my job fer sure.
Tell you what, why don't you
write to me and tell me what
should be axed from
future issues of SHADIS?
I need a yay or nay vote on the
following items — hurry,
or it may be too late.

| Keep | Eat | |
|---|---|---|
| ❑ | ❑ | BRIGHT FUTURE |
| ❑ | ❑ | SHADIS Interrogations |
| ❑ | ❑ | Play-By-Mail |
| ❑ | ❑ | Others ?? |

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CYBER REALMS

BRIGHT FUTURE
WRITTEN BY EDWIN MILLHIEM
LAYOUTS RAY LEDERER
FINISHES ROLAND PAUL
LETTERS LISA HERRING
EDITOR DONNA MILLHIEM
©1995 DONNA & EDWIN MILLHIEM
ONE OF THE WORST FEELINGS IN THE WORLD IS WHEN YOU CAN'T BREATHE. WHAT MAKES IT EVEN WORSE IS THE FEELING OF YOUR LUNGS FIGHTING WITH YOUR BRAIN, SEEKING TO GASP IN THE LIFEGIVING AIR. YOUR BRAIN HOLDS BACK, FOR IT KNOWS FULL WELL THAT IF IT BREATHES IN NOW, WATER WILL COME RUSHING IN AND OFFER NOT LIFE BUT A SURE AGONIZING DEATH.
JOANN SEES GARY ROCKET TOWARDS THE SURFACE, LEGS AND ARMS A PIN WHEEL OF DETERMINATION. HER DETERMINATION BURNS AS WELL, BUT HER GOAL IS IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. IGNORING THE PAIN THAT SEEKS TO CAVE IN HER BURNING CHEST SHE HEADS DOWN.

EASY, PAL.
DEAR GOD, I HOPE NO ONE ELSE WAS IN THERE!
COUGH! COUGH! J...JOE...
DAMN IT! JOANN! SOMEBODY GET A MED CREW AND SEARCH TEAM SENT FAST!
THIS IS AN EMERGENCY, POLICE BUSINESS. MY PARTNER AND I HAVE GOT TO GET TO THE STATION. WE'RE GONNA NEED A LIFT FAST!
PWAAHHHH! PTOOOE! THAT TAGGER IS GOING TO PAY BIG!
HELL OFFICER, THAT'S MY BOAT. I'LL GET YA THERE!

NOTHING. SHE HAS **NOTHING** HERE! HER APARTMENT IS THE NEXT PLACE TO SEARCH AND THEN I...
HUH!?
ROSS, THE HEAD OFFICE IS PULLING YOUR PLUG. YOU HAVE A KNACK FOR DRAWING TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO OUR AFFAIRS.
PRECINCT
MY FOINTY-HEADED FRIEND, I AM TOO IMPORTANT TO THIS PROJECT. I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE. MY FRIENDS WILL SEE TO THAT. AND BESIDES, I'VE GOT SOME MORE CLEANING UP TO DO.
SON OF A... IT'S CHRISTMAS!
ROSS, YOU'RE UNDER ARREST! WE CAN COMPILE THE LIST OF CHARGES AT A LATER DATE.
I THINK NOT DANNS!
PUNK!
KA-POW!

ALL OF YOU STAY DOWN IF YOU DON'T WANT...
BRREK!!
POC! POC!
SPUT! SPUT!
OH... CRIPES!
DING!
THAT'S MY TAGGER! HE'S MINE!
I THINK I'D BEST TAKE THE STAIRS. HELL. HE'S HEADED FOR THE ROOF! WHAT THE HECK DOES HE THINK HE'S... DAMN! HE'S GOING FOR A BUMBLEBEE!
GARY, SOME OF YOU HEAD DOWN IN CASE HE DOUBLES BACK!
AS SHE ENTERS THE BAY STORAGE AREA, THE FAMILIAR SMELLS OF OIL AND FUEL ASSAULT HER SENSES. AT ONCE, SHE SPOTS ONE OF THE MECHANICS ON THE FLOOR. FEARING THE WORST SHE SURGES FORWARD.
HE TOOK A BUMBLEBEE! JUST NOW USING THE LIFT!
NO WAY IS HE GETTING AWAY. NO WAY!
NO STE

**Boredflak the Mighty Bolt Lobber** finds himself trapped in a dead-end as the Bohemian Undead close in for the kill, when suddenly—

Finieous Fingers • Created by J.D. Webster. Story by J.A. Hollingsed. Additional Dialogue by K.J. Potter

# Finieous Fingers: The World's Greatest Thief in "Eu'ryting's Coming Up Cothic"

ONCE WE WERE A MIGHTY RACE, THE SACRED WARRIORS OF THE SPIRIT, PLEDGED TO A CAUSE WHICH GOES BEYOND BIRTH AND DEATH—THE PRESERVERS OF THE RAW ESSENCE OF LIFE AGAINST THE LOCUSTS OF ALL THAT IS CORRUPT AND UNHOLY.
...BUT NOW OUR KIND HAS FORGOTTEN THE OLD WAYS—THEY HAVE BECOME SLOTHFUL AND LAZY, EASILY ENRAPTURED BY THE VILE ENTICEMENTS PERPETRATED BY THE VERY CHAOS WE ONCE SWORE TO PURGE.
TONIGHT: A VERY SPECIAL MODELS INC.
O MY BRETHREN! CAN YOU NOT SEE THE SIGNS? ARMAGEDDON IS UPON US! QUAND RAGIEZ-VOUS? QUAND RAGIEZ-VOUS?
UH, YEAH. ALL THIS CHAOS STUFF—IT'S BAD. REALLY BAD. SAY, DO YOU HAVE A HAIRPIN I COULD BORROW?
O, MERDE! WHERE ARE MY MANNERS? GIVE ME A MOMENT TO COMPOSE MYSELF...
THANKS, SISTER. THESE CUFFS ARE CHAFING LIKE CRAZY.
SACRE-COUER! YOU CAN PICK LOCKS?
SURE. PICK LOCKS, CLIMB WALLS, MOVE SILENTLY, BEND BARS, LIFT GATES—THE WHOLE NINE YARDS.
ALL RIGHT; NOW WE'RE GETTING SOMEWHERE.
JACKIE, YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE THE WORLD'S GREATEST THIEF EXECUTE A BRILLIANT AND FLAWLESS ESCAPE PLAN!
HMM. I WONDER WHY HIS HAIR HAS THAT FUNNY SHAPE...?

# THE ADVENTURES OF JOE GENERO THE AVERAGE MAN

*this month's pavement-cracking predicament:*

# JOE FALLS DOWN!

## HOW FAR DOES JOE HAVE TO FALL TO **GET KILLED?**

In other words, these are the distances calculated from each game system of giving the Average Person an instant fatality at least 95% of the time. Where applicable, discrete variables have been converted to continuous distances based on probability—I.E., we got decimals.

**ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS** (TSR): 9 FEET

**CALL OF CTHULU** (CHAOSIUM): 27 FEET

**CHAMPIONS** (HERO GAMES): 292 FEET

**GURPS** (STEVE JACKSON GAMES): 49 FEET

**TRAVELLER: NEW ERA** (GDW): 369 FEET

**VAMPIRE** (WHITE WOLF): 70 FEET

*UNDER THE "QUICK KILL" RULES, THIS DISTANCE IS ONLY 9 FEET.

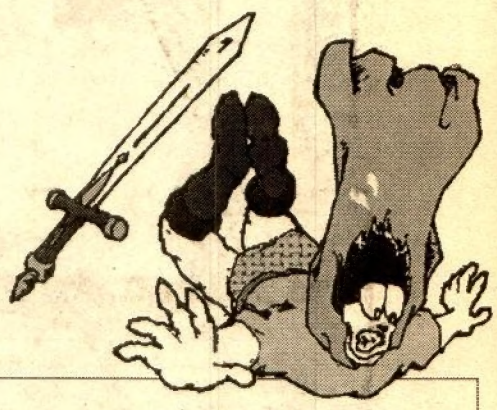
### REMEMBER TO BEND YOUR KNEES!

In *Champions*, Joe can "push" his strength and try to land on his feet; if he's alert, he has a 95% chance of taking no lasting damage from a 15-foot drop.

In *Traveller*, he can use his agility and have a 95% of taking no damage from a 21-foot drop.

### HMM . . . MAYBE THERE **IS** MORE THAN ONE . . .

In *Legacy: War of Ages* (Black Gate Publishing), falling damage is considered "casual." Even a low-lander like Joe cannot be killed by the maximum damage from falling.



### UGH, WHAT A MESS . . .

In *GURPS*, falling onto another person is considered to be a "soft landing." If Joe plummets 60 feet, but lands on another person, he has 20% chance of taking no damage at all. The hapless person he falls on, however, has a 95% chance of being crushed to death.

JOE IS SURFING THE INTERNET—
AND HE WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU! JGenero@aol.com

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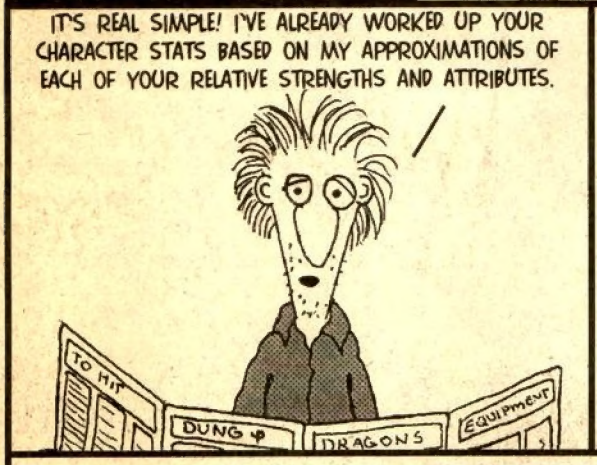
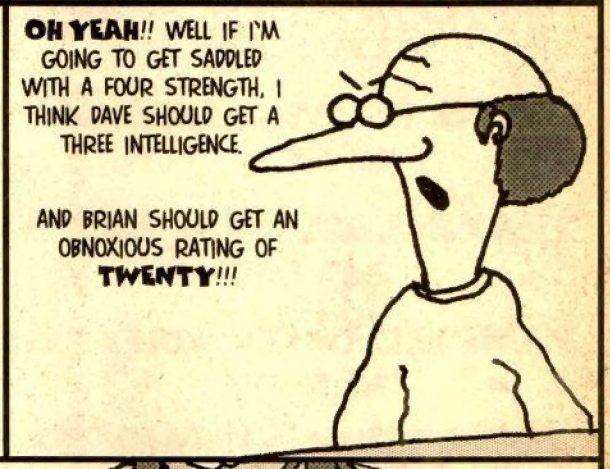
# Knights of the Dinner Table™

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN © 1994

B.A HAS JUST PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON HIS NEW HOME-BREWED ROLE-PLAYING GAME, **HACKMASTER**! HE PROUDLY UNVEILS HIS NEW GAME TO HIS PLAYERS....





"And it shall come to pass in that day that the lord shall punish the Host of the high ones that are on high and the kings of the earth upon the earth."

Isaiah 24:21

# HERESY

## Kingdom Come

**Judgment is Nigh**

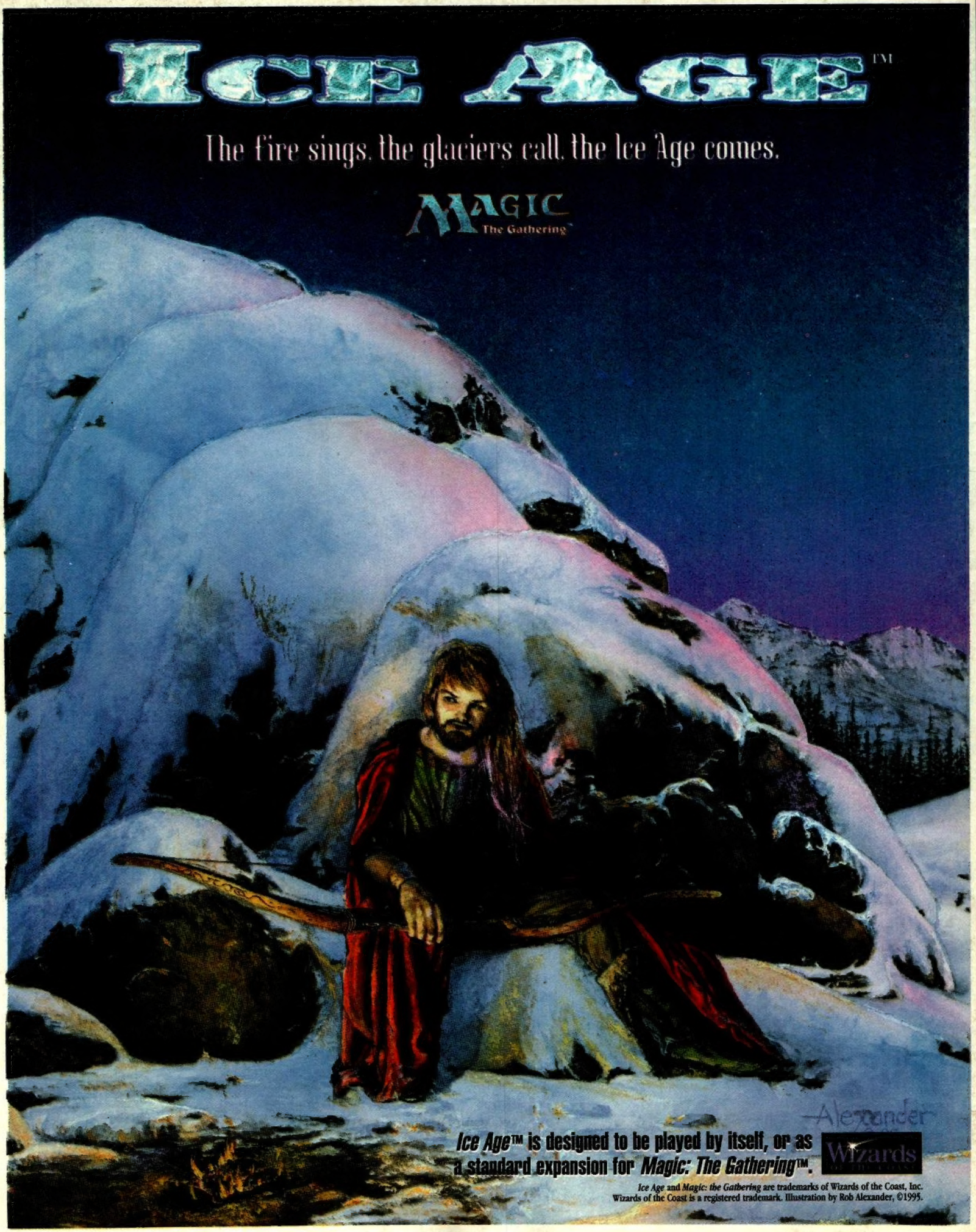
**Summer 1995**

Distributor and dealer inquiries welcome:

(800) 958-6426 or (800) 275-4323

LAST UNICORN GAMES

Heresy: Kingdom Come is Last Unicorn Games' trademark for its collectible trading card game of fallen angels, virtual prophets and chromeopathic dreamwalkers, all struggling to achieve Re-ascension amidst the Ruin of a Decaying Matrix and a Forsaken Earth.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